

THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1895.

WHEN LEAVES WERE GREEN.

BY SYDNEY HODGES.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AT ZERMATT.

ZERMATT! What marvellous recollections are awakened by the very name! What visions of snow-clad peaks, mighty glaciers, foaming torrents and shadowy pines! Monte Rosa, the Breithorn, the Matterhorn, the Weisshorn, the Stockhorn, stand around you in a majesty of silence, more eloquent than words, linked in a mystic circle with hands of ice. If, at intervals, they speak, it is in the rush and roar of an avalanche, or the crack of a mighty glacier. Gazing from the Gornergrat, five thousand feet above the village, miles and miles of ice-fields lie below; at such a dizzy depth, that a stone thrown from where you stand, vanishes in mid-air before it is half-way down. Here for a mile or two the ice-plain lies with its mantle of snow as smooth and soft as the breast of a swan. There it is cracked and rent and riven into a million fantastic shapes. Pinnacles, spires and bastions are heaped in inextricable confusion. Huge crevasses yawn between. Ice caverns, blue as heaven, lie hidden in the depths, and over all the sunshine gleams and glints as from ten thousand diamond facets, turning it all to a realm of unimaginable delight.

On the western side of this glorious valley Glyn had set up his easel, far up on the slopes leading to the Hornli. He had been married a month. After a hurried visit to his mother, who was thriving wonderfully in the pure sea air, he and his wife had come abroad and had been moving from place to place until they reached Zermatt, whose wonders so impressed Glyn that he resolved to recommence work without delay.

It was the best thing he could do. In spite of change of scene and

relief from pressing needs, he went about with a dull weight at his heart, which was almost worse than active grief, for it never left him night or day. He strove hard to hide it from his wife, to whom he was all kindness, and in this he happily succeeded. Laura's nature was one that never indulged in strong emotions. She liked to glide through life easily. As she did not go into heroics herself, she did not much care for them in other people. She had secured the husband of her choice. He was very attentive and kind, and seemed to her fairly happy. It was not therefore necessary for her to ask whether he was getting over his former hopeless attachment. Indeed there were many circumstances connected with the case, which rendered it anything but an agreeable topic to Mrs. Glyn Beverley. So, in this month of her second honeymoon, she let it drop out of her mind altogether.

"Do you care about my going with you to-day, Glyn?" she asked as her husband was putting his traps together at the "Monte Rosa."

"Why, dear?"

"Because, love, those nice people from Kensington are going up to the Riffel, and have asked us to go with them. I said I was sure you would not go, as you were so bent on your sketch."

"And that means that you promised you would," said Glyn, laughing. "Of course you can do as you like. I dare say it is dull for you, sitting reading all day while I am sketching."

To do Laura justice, she had stuck to her work manfully for the first few days, taking books and her work with her and keeping pretty closely to Glyn's side while he worked. But this could not last, and Glyn, who read her nature thoroughly, knew it. She had no real appreciation of art nor interest in watching the progress of a picture. She liked what was pretty, but the lengthened process of producing the pretty object was tedious to her.

So Laura, mounted on a pony, set off with her new friends to climb the steep ascent to the Riffel, and enjoy a nice dinner at the hotel, so pleasantly perched on the shoulder of the mountain some three thousand feet above Zermatt; while her husband, shouldering his havresack, set out alone to mount the slopes of the Hornli.

His easel and heavier traps were left at a chalet in the high pastures that overlook the magnificent ice-fall of the Gorner Glacier, so that being light-weighted, he trudged briskly onward.

Was it to be wondered at that he drew a long sigh of relief when he was fairly away from the village, and had crossed the swift stream which comes downward in such mad haste from the Z'Mutt Glacier? He had hardly been alone since his marriage; and, when there is a constant pain at the heart, companionship of the light-hearted becomes at times intolerable. To get away into the vast solitudes of nature is at such times a relief unspeakable.

He sat down on a slope of rich flowing grass twinkling in the intense sunshine, and alive with butterflies, which rival the flowers

themselves in these wondrous Swiss valleys. Far down to the right the stream rushed and foamed over a chaos of huge boulders which strove in vain to block its passage through the narrow gorge.

Beyond the gorge lay slope upon slope of rich pastures, dotted here and there with solitary pines which seemed like skirmishers thrown out from the dense masses which stood in closely serried ranks above. To the left, on this side the stream, the pine woods were yet more dense, falling in dark sunless masses almost perpendicularly from the slopes which lead to the Schwarze See down to the bed of the stream. Above these dark masses a single pinnacle of sunlit snow rose into the pure blue ether. The dark line of the pine forest cut it sharply across and seemed to separate it from this lower world, while it intensified its brightness. It was something "mystic, wonderful;" held aloft as if by the hand of enchantment; the most awe-inspiring of all summits, the peak of the Matterhorn.

It was the first time Glyn had had much time to think. He had striven hard to shut out the past. He never looked into a newspaper. He had even forbidden his sister to mention anything she might hear connected with Blanche Venables, so that on this subject he was in utter ignorance; and it was by no means likely that his wife would touch on topics at all calculated to reawaken feelings which she knew had once stirred her husband's heart to its inmost depths.

Presently Glyn rose and strode away up the path which leads to the point he had selected for his sketch. As he approached the skirts of the pine forest he became conscious of the presence of some figures in the deep shadows cast by the pines on to the steep slope of grass.

One, the nearest to him, was a lady sitting a little off the path, apparently contemplating the glorious view. A book with open leaves lay on the grass at her side, but the attractions of the scene had evidently weaned the reader's attention from its pages. Some distance down the slope a young girl, apparently a maid, was gathering wild flowers, and near her a guide lay on the grass lazily smoking a cigarette.

Glyn took in all this without any feeling of interest. Indeed in his present mood he wished rather to avoid strangers than encounter them. When a startling surprise is in store for us it is difficult to define the exact moment that it dawns upon us. Something in the half-averted face of the lady made him look again. The second look caused a sudden sensation of wonderment, and brought him to a dead stop.

The cessation of the footsteps, rather than the footsteps themselves, made the lady turn her head, and Glyn looked once more on the face of Blanche Venables.

For a few brief moments they gazed into each other's eyes, neither knowing what to say; but however much of outward calm they displayed, there was wild tumult within. Glyn's heart beat with almost audible throbs, and Blanche rose quickly as though she would have moved away.

relief from pressing needs, he went about with a dull weight at his heart, which was almost worse than active grief, for it never left him night or day. He strove hard to hide it from his wife, to whom he was all kindness, and in this he happily succeeded. Laura's nature was one that never indulged in strong emotions. She liked to glide through life easily. As she did not go into heroics herself, she did not much care for them in other people. She had secured the husband of her choice. He was very attentive and kind, and seemed to her fairly happy. It was not therefore necessary for her to ask whether he was getting over his former hopeless attachment. Indeed there were many circumstances connected with the case, which rendered it anything but an agreeable topic to Mrs. Glyn Beverley. So, in this month of her second honeymoon, she let it drop out of her mind altogether.

"Do you care about my going with you to-day, Glyn?" she asked as her husband was putting his traps together at the "Monte Rosa."

"Why, dear?"

"Because, love, those nice people from Kensington are going up to the Riffel, and have asked us to go with them. I said I was sure you would not go, as you were so bent on your sketch."

"And that means that you promised you would," said Glyn, laughing. "Of course you can do as you like. I dare say it is dull for you, sitting reading all day while I am sketching."

To do Laura justice, she had stuck to her work manfully for the first few days, taking books and her work with her and keeping pretty closely to Glyn's side while he worked. But this could not last, and Glyn, who read her nature thoroughly, knew it. She had no real appreciation of art nor interest in watching the progress of a picture. She liked what was pretty, but the lengthened process of producing the pretty object was tedious to her.

So Laura, mounted on a pony, set off with her new friends to climb the steep ascent to the Riffel, and enjoy a nice dinner at the hotel, so pleasantly perched on the shoulder of the mountain some three thousand feet above Zermatt; while her husband, shouldering his havresack, set out alone to mount the slopes of the Hornli,

His easel and heavier traps were left at a chalet in the high pastures that overlook the magnificent ice-fall of the Gorner Glacier, so that being light-weighted, he trudged briskly onward.

Was it to be wondered at that he drew a long sigh of relief when he was fairly away from the village, and had crossed the swift stream which comes downward in such mad haste from the Z'Mutt Glacier? He had hardly been alone since his marriage; and, when there is a constant pain at the heart, companionship of the light-hearted becomes at times intolerable. To get away into the vast solitudes of nature is at such times a relief unspeakable.

He sat down on a slope of rich flowing grass twinkling in the intense sunshine, and alive with butterflies, which rival the flowers,

themselves in these wondrous Swiss valleys. Far down to the right the stream rushed and foamed over a chaos of huge boulders which strove in vain to block its passage through the narrow gorge.

Beyond the gorge lay slope upon slope of rich pastures, dotted here and there with solitary pines which seemed like skirmishers thrown out from the dense masses which stood in closely serried ranks above. To the left, on this side the stream, the pine woods were yet more dense, falling in dark sunless masses almost perpendicularly from the slopes which lead to the Schwarze See down to the bed of the stream. Above these dark masses a single pinnacle of sunlit snow rose into the pure blue ether. The dark line of the pine forest cut it sharply across and seemed to separate it from this lower world, while it intensified its brightness. It was something "mystic, wonderful;" held aloft as if by the hand of enchantment; the most awe-inspiring of all summits, the peak of the Matterhorn.

It was the first time Glyn had had much time to think. He had striven hard to shut out the past. He never looked into a newspaper. He had even forbidden his sister to mention anything she might hear connected with Blanche Venables, so that on this subject he was in utter ignorance; and it was by no means likely that his wife would touch on topics at all calculated to reawaken feelings which she knew had once stirred her husband's heart to its inmost depths.

Presently Glyn rose and strode away up the path which leads to the point he had selected for his sketch. As he approached the skirts of the pine forest he became conscious of the presence of some figures in the deep shadows cast by the pines on to the steep slope of grass.

One, the nearest to him, was a lady sitting a little off the path, apparently contemplating the glorious view. A book with open leaves lay on the grass at her side, but the attractions of the scene had evidently weaned the reader's attention from its pages. Some distance down the slope a young girl, apparently a maid, was gathering wild flowers, and near her a guide lay on the grass lazily smoking a cigarette.

Glyn took in all this without any feeling of interest. Indeed in his present mood he wished rather to avoid strangers than encounter them. When a startling surprise is in store for us it is difficult to define the exact moment that it dawns upon us. Something in the half-averted face of the lady made him look again. The second look caused a sudden sensation of wonderment, and brought him to a dead stop.

The cessation of the footsteps, rather than the footsteps themselves, made the lady turn her head, and Glyn looked once more on the face of Blanche Venables.

For a few brief moments they gazed into each other's eyes, neither knowing what to say; but however much of outward calm they displayed, there was wild tumult within. Glyn's heart beat with almost audible throbs, and Blanche rose quickly as though she would have moved away.

But whatever the turmoil of his breast, whatever the bitterness of his blighted life, Glyn was a gentleman still. He had known this girl intimately, had received endless kindnesses from her, and was now brought thus strangely into her presence in a remote land. He advanced with outstretched hand.

Blanche touched it coldly, with a still colder lifting of the head and a touch of scorn on her lips. She was deadly pale, her face was worn and thin, and now, for the first time, Glyn perceived that she was in deep mourning.

"Miss Venables—I—this is a strange meeting. Forgive me if I am wrong, but I do not know whether I am to address you by your old name."

"Mr. Beverley, I do not know what you mean."

There was a still more lofty look of scorn, and another movement as if to depart.

However deep the wrong she had done him, it was horrible, unnatural to meet and part like this. He glanced at her dress.

"Let me at least say how shocked I am to see you in mourning. I have been long absent from home. I have purposely heard nothing. I do trust it is not——"

"It is my father," she answered, interrupting him. "Pray spare me any reference to it. I cannot bear it."

"I should have respected your grief had I known of it, believe me, Miss Venables. Since we *have* met, at least let me ask if you still bear that name?"

"I am utterly at a loss to understand you. Why should I not still bear it?"

"You *will* not understand me," Glyn answered. "You must know that I could not remain ignorant of the marriage you contemplated two months ago."

"That *I* contemplated? Mr. Beverley, I can hardly think you would choose a time like this to actually insult me, but your words almost drive me to think so. This meeting is an unfortunate mischance. We had better end it."

She made a little movement with her hand as if to prevent his interrupting her. Then she went on.

"I had wished—I had striven hard, in spite of what has occurred, to hold you in friendly remembrance. I made excuses for you. If anything, I pitied you, though I could not wholly forget the insult. Let there be an end of this now."

Again she made a movement to depart. This time Glyn caught her hand and held it in spite of her effort to withdraw it.

"Miss Venables, you shall not speak to me in this way. You shall not do me this injustice. *I* insult *you*! *I* an object for your pity! It is you who have done me the most cruel wrong it is possible for a woman to commit."

"This is intolerable," Blanche answered, a hot flush of anger rising

to her brow. "Will you force upon me the indignity of reminding you of your words to me in your own studio? Words which I was weak enough to believe as sincere as a man could utter, and are you not the husband of my friend? Oh, that I should be so mad, so weak as to say all this!"

Glyn dropped her hand.

"There is some dreadful mystery here," he said, passing his fingers rapidly across his forehead. "I was never false to you. I would have given my life for you—all too willingly. It was your own act which drove me to do what I did. Your own letter, which has blasted my whole future life. As Heaven is my witness this day, I have not one hope in all the long and dreadful future."

Blanche turned suddenly, and fixed her eyes full upon him with a look so intense that it seemed to read his soul.

"My own letter?" she said. "I wrote no letter. I half suspect—tell me quickly what you mean."

"You forget, Miss Venables, you *did*. I saw it with my own eyes, else I would not have believed it."

"What letter?"

"The letter announcing your approaching marriage with D'Eyncourt. I saw it, I tell you."

She gave another impatient gesture. "Mr. Beverley, I think you must be mad. I never dreamed of such a marriage. Never wrote such a letter. Let me go on."

"What does it all mean?" Glyn gasped. "Miss Venables. I cannot disbelieve my own eyesight. I cannot believe that you would wilfully tell me a lie. We may never have another chance of an explanation. We may be interrupted here. Let us go into this wood."

The guide had finished his cigarette and was fast asleep on the sunny slope. The maid was wandering further away, intent upon her flowers. Above the solemn pines, the snow-streaked pyramid of the Matterhorn rose into the silent air. Cattle bells, softened by distance, tinkled in the pastures far, far below. The stream roared hoarsely in the gorge. Insects plied their busy trade of life amid the grass. Butterflies, crimson, golden, scarlet, and purple—exquisite flowers of the air—dropped and kissed their loved ones the flowers of the earth. And in the midst of all the surpassing loveliness, two trouble-tossed hearts passed into the shadows of the pines, thinking that for them at least earth held no more of happiness.

CHAPTER XXX.

IN THE TRACK OF THE AVALANCHE.

GLYN led the way up a small track which diverged from the broad path into the deeper recesses of the forest. Blanche followed without a word. The consciousness, for the first time, came upon her that she might have been guilty of a terrible injustice to the man she loved.

They came to a broad open space—the probable path of an avalanche, for the pines were torn short off, and huge whitened trunks lay about in wild confusion. But here, as if the earth strove to compensate itself for long absence from the sun, the luxuriance of vegetation was greater even than on the outskirts of the forest. Nature had it all her own way. A footstep seldom intruded on this pine-encircled spot. The wondrous flowers grew for the butterflies and bees, not to gladden the heart of man.

Glyn pointed to a fallen pine, and his companion sat down upon it, he placing himself by her side.

There was silence for some minutes. At length Glyn said, "I don't know what to say to you now that I have brought you here. I feel that anything I can say is useless—indeed, situated as I am, is wrong. But we must at least get to the bottom of this mystery. You tell me you never wrote a letter announcing your engagement."

"Never."

"What will you say, then, when I tell you that I saw the letter to which I refer, and which has changed my whole life, on Mrs. Byng's—on—my wife's breakfast-table. That I saw your own handwriting?"

"Did you read the letter?"

"No, but I was told I might. Indeed my first impulse prompted me to do so, but the horror of the thought that you had given yourself to another was enough, without seeing your own words in confirmation."

"But the contents could not have confirmed such a thing, for I never wrote it."

"There is the mystery. You know, or perhaps you do not know, that Miss Maitland was fond of Captain D'Eyncourt. I happened to have discovered it accidentally. She was in Bruton Street at the time. She read the letter. You will perhaps believe that I could not be mistaken in the contents when I tell you that it drove her to attempt suicide."

"Suicide! Is it possible?"

"I should never have mentioned this under happier circumstances. I only do so now to show you the effect of that letter on others beside myself. I know the secret is safe with you."

"Poor Sib—poor dear Sib! Oh, Mr. Beverley, what does it all mean? What *can* it mean? You must believe that I tell you the truth."

She sat with hands clasped in humble entreaty, her eyes swimming in tears. Glyn took both her hands in his own, looking her full in the face. His own lips were tight and drawn, but there was a quiver of the muscles quite beyond his own control which showed the trouble that worked within.

"There has been some horrible wickedness at work, Blanche. That is the solution of it. It has ruined both our lives."

He bowed his face upon his hands. His whole frame shook beneath his uncontrollable grief. He could bear it no longer.

Blanche sat by in unspeakable misery. Oh, if she only had the right to comfort him! She dared not trust herself even to touch his hand.

"Mr. Beverley, in pity do not give way like this. What can I say to you? For your own sake—for mine, try to bear it."

"Forgive me," said Glyn, looking up. "It is wretched weakness to break down in this way. But we cannot let this matter rest here. Tell me, have you no notion what it all means? It must have been your letter, whatever the contents were. I could not mistake your writing."

"That is the strange part of it. I did write at that time, but it was to say how persecuted I had been by Captain D'Eyncourt. How much my dear father wished me to marry him, and how impossible I felt it to accede to his wishes. It was the only subject on which we ever differed. But then it all arose from love. He dreaded to leave me unprotected."

"But D'Eyncourt was with you wherever you went, I was told."

"He would persist in coming, although he saw I did not wish it. It was for this reason—to get rid of him—that I proposed the trip to Naples. But he followed us even there. Why did you not write as you promised?"

"I wrote twice. Do you mean to tell me you did not get my letters?"

"No, I never had one."

"Is it possible? Oh, how cruelly I have misjudged you. Can I ever forgive myself? But what does it mean? You returned to Rome after going to Naples. You should have found my letters there."

"I did not. Not a line ever reached me."

A dark thought crossed Glyn's mind.

"Did Captain D'Eyncourt have anything to do with your letters?" he asked.

"Not that I am aware of. Yet, stay—let me think. Yes, I remember when we returned to Rome, we went to another hotel. I asked him to call at the former one for our letters."

Their eyes met, and the same thought flashed into the minds of both.

"It is not possible that he was guilty of such villainy as to intercept your letters," Glyn said.

"Surely he could not; besides, what could have been his motive?"

"Motive or not, I can see no other solution of this mystery. But that other letter. He could not possibly have forged it—it could not be——"

He stopped suddenly. The horrible thought crossed his mind that perhaps his wife had done this. The thought was too dreadful to contemplate. Yet the solution of the mystery lay between her and D'Eyncourt. He groaned aloud.

"Oh, if I had not been so precipitate!" he exclaimed.

"It is terrible if you do not love her. It will ruin your life."

"My whole life," moaned Glyn.

"But what could have induced you? I cannot conceive anything tempting you to such a course."

"Do not judge me harshly. It is bad enough to reflect on my folly—my crime. You must not reproach me. You do not know how I was tempted. Miss Venables, it is an insult to say this to you now; but even you do not know how intensely I have loved you. How my whole soul from the first moment I knew you has been centred in you. I had no thought or hope apart from you—no joy in anything else in this world. Do not stop me now. I must tell you all. I shall never have another chance. Even when you forbade me to speak to you of my love, I could not relinquish hope. I worked hard; for my only thought was that if I gained a high position in my profession, I might be thought worthy of you. Then came that bitter disappointment at the Academy. My pictures were turned out."

"I heard it. I cannot tell you how grieved I was," Blanche said softly.

"It preyed on my mind to such an extent that I became morbid. It was not only the thought of rejection, but what it involved. It destroyed my hope of gaining you. Still I resolved not to give way. I determined to work still harder. In the midst of this came a commission from Mrs. Byng to paint her portrait. Of course I was thrown much with her. She was kind and sympathetic in every way, but it was she who first unsettled my mind about you and D'Eyncourt."

Blanche moved uneasily, but she did not speak.

"Well, it is useless troubling you with details. It can do no good now. My mother was taken ill—seriously ill. Change was necessary for her, the doctor ordered her away, but—it is useless to conceal the fact—I had not the money wherewith to send her, at least I could not well spare it. I was worried to death by small troubles, which told upon me in the morbid state into which I had fallen. In the midst of this came the fatal news that you were about to marry D'Eyncourt. It nearly drove me mad. I broke down utterly in the

presence of the widow one day, and then, in a moment of mad impulse—knowing that she loved me—I took the fatal step.”

Blanche did not speak. She had no words of comfort to utter.

“I repented it the moment the step was taken, bitterly repented it. The memory of the night which followed will never leave me. I realised then more than ever, how intensely dear you were to me, even though, as I believed, you had given yourself to that man. I thought, even if I never saw you, that the only happiness I could know would be to be true to your memory.”

Still Blanche did not move or speak. She sat with half-averted face, every word that Glyn uttered thrilling her heart to its inmost depths.

“That is all over now,” he continued. “The bitter part of it is, that I must shut out even the memory of you from my heart—and I have striven to do so—Heaven knows how earnestly, even in this last miserable month.”

He dropped his head upon his hands again. There was still no word from Blanche. She seemed turned to stone.

Suddenly he rose up with clenched fingers, and bitter anger on his brow.

“As to that man,” he cried, “if he has done this thing, may curses light on him. If ever we meet——”

Blanche grasped his arm and gazed in his face imploringly. “Hush!” she said; “violence can do no good. We are in the hands of God. Let us strive to be patient.”

The butterflies danced in the air, the bees were busy with the flowers; huge grasshoppers chirruped loudly in the rich undergrowth; the brisk lizard sunned himself on the lichened rock hard by; and in the midst of all this life and sunshine, these two still sat side by side on the fallen pine, with faces in which was written the word Despair.

Presently Blanche spoke.

“We must not meet again. I could not trust myself. This meeting has shown me my weakness.”

“What shall you do?” Glyn asked.

“I don’t know. Only that I shall leave Zermatt to-morrow. I think I shall go back to England, perhaps to Lupton. If I can summon courage it would be the best thing. I must busy myself with the people there. I have been away too long. There are many ways in which I can perhaps do good, and—divert my thoughts. It is best for me.”

“You have not told me what brought you here. It is marvellous that I should have come upon you in this way. Have you been here long? but that you cannot have been, or we should have met before.”

“I have been wandering from place to place. After my terrible loss I could not settle anywhere. My first impulse was to return home, but then——”

“Yes?”

"There came a letter from Sib, and—I could not go home after that."

"I see—I see. God forgive me!"

"No, I do not mean a reproach. Not now."

"Well, well. You are all goodness still. But you will forgive my asking about your father now. When was it?"

"At Naples. Almost suddenly. Oh do not let me dwell on it. When I heard the news from England, I felt that I must seek some change of scene. Inaction was unbearable. I came here by the merest chance. Now that I have seen you, I feel better able to return home. That is the best thing for me, I know. And you? What will you do?"

"I have but one thing to do—to unravel this mystery. If it is, as I suspect, God help the evil-doers. They will have no pity from me. You tell me to be patient, but I will also be just. People cannot be allowed to escape the consequences of such a foul wrong as this. Justice is not yet dead, thank Heaven!"

There was another silence, then Blanche rose.

"I will go now," she said.

"Not the least bitter part of it is," continued Glyn, "that I must not even see you off to-morrow."

"It is better so, believe me. We must part here, now. I am glad to have had this explanation—more glad than I can express, but it has shown me that I am only a very, very weak and erring woman."

"The best and dearest that ever lived," broke forth from Glyn.

"No, no. You must not say that to me. Let me go now."

"I must at least walk with you to the end of the wood."

"Yes, if you will."

Not another word was said. When they emerged into the open space, Blanche stopped and put her hand in Glyn's.

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

She turned and called her maid, and went away down the path followed by the guide.

Glyn stood gazing after her until she was out of sight. Then he turned and went back into the shadow of the wood.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

"THE idea of your giving up sketching, and following us up here, Glyn! I am so glad you are come, though. The Atkinsons want us to go on over the Theodule with them. The guides tell me it is as easy as possible. I should so like to go. This is much the best place to start from, and we could send back for our traps."

This was up at the Riffel where Glyn had arrived that afternoon, much to his wife's amazement.

"Laura, we will not talk about the Theodule. I have something very serious to say to you."

She looked up in surprise. The more than ordinary gravity of her husband's face seemed to strike her with a chill. She seated herself on the edge of the little French bedstead; for the conversation took place in the small chamber which she had succeeded in securing in this usually overcrowded hotel.

"What is it, Glyn?"

He fixed his eyes upon her steadily. "I have seen Blanche Venables this morning," he said.

Laura turned as white as the coverlet upon which she was seated. Her cheeks seemed literally to shrink in. For a moment she could not speak.

"Blanche Venables!" she at length ejaculated.

"Yes."

His own emotion was scarcely less than his wife's. The issue of this conversation was so momentous, affecting his whole future life. Was he to discover that his wife was utterly false and bad, or should he be again able to take her to his heart as one who had done him no wrong?

"I have had a long conversation with her. She tells me she was never engaged to D'Eyncourt, never had the remotest intention of marrying him. Why did you tell me that letter you showed me was an announcement of her intended marriage?"

"Because it was, Glyn."

She was beginning to recover herself. She said the words confidently, looking up in his face.

"If it was, it was a forgery," he said. "*Do you know who forged it?*"

It was a direct uncompromising question, put in plain words. If the wife had had the courage there and then to confess the truth, it is possible that in the after years she might have been forgiven. But her nature was weak, her conscience elastic. She had recourse to a lie to ward off her husband's righteous wrath.

"No, Glyn. How could I possibly know who forged it? What a very dreadful thing."

He placed his finger under her pretty dimpled chin, and turned her face up to his still more. She met his gaze with an unmoved countenance, almost with a look of childish innocence.

"*On your solemn word of honour this is true?*"

"*On my solemn word of honour, it is true.*"

Glyn looked steadily at her for several seconds.

"Laura, this is not a time to trifle or deceive. The words you speak at this moment may affect the happiness of your whole life. Why did you turn so pale when I told you I had seen Blanche Venables?"

The imminent danger was past—the wife was quite herself again by this time.

"Is it not natural that I should feel a shock at suddenly hearing that you had met Blanche, knowing what your feeling was towards her? The thought has haunted me night and day that if you met again you might continue to care more for her than for me."

"Was that the real reason?"

"Yes. Why should you doubt me? How could I possibly know anything of the forgery? It is difficult now to believe it. Have you any idea who forged it?"

"I have, but at present I wish to say nothing."

"At least you will acquit me of any participation in the fraud. How cruel of you to suspect me. You will never do so again, will you?"

A great sigh broke from Glyn.

"Ah," he said, "thank God that load is off my mind." Then he stooped and kissed his wife, and turned away and looked out of the window.

Mrs. Beverley went to the wash-stand, poured out a glass of water, and drank it off. It was fortunate her husband was not looking. Her hand trembled so, that she could hardly hold the glass. It was the reaction of the last five minutes.

Glyn remained gazing from the window. Below, was the sunlit shoulder of the mountain upon which the hotel was built. Immediately beyond its verge, the mountain side dropped abruptly to the pine woods a thousand feet beneath. Beyond the pines again he saw the roofs and smoke of Zermatt. "Was she there still," he thought, "or would she hasten her departure and get away at once?" He hoped the latter. It is better so, he thought. Then his eyes wandered away up the very pastures which he had climbed that morning, and with a sickening of the heart, he thought he could even detect the break in the forest where he had sat with Blanche. It was more than he could bear. His eyes still soared upward, to the point where he had commenced his sketch a few days before. It was all useless now. He could never mount that pathway again. It would drive him mad to sit there alone. Still upward his gaze travelled, to the snow fields of the Furggen Glacier, to the dark, sharp point of the Hornli, to the still majesty of the great mountain itself. The afternoon sunlight was coming round on to the northern face; casting long shadows of intense blue adown the slopes of snow, and turning the snow itself to gold. His gaze lighted on the topmost crest, fourteen thousand feet aloft in the blue air. There was nothing beyond but the sky so still and pure. "Ah! if we were all as pure as that," thought Glyn, "and if some of its serenity could fall upon our troubled hearts!"

His wife touched him on the arm.

"Will you go over the Theodule, Glyn?" she asked.

"Yes, but we will not come back here. We will go on into Italy."

"But what about your sketch, dear?"

"My sketch may gladden the eyes of the good old woman up at the chalet yonder. I shall not trouble myself about it."

His wife did not press the matter further. She had her own reasons for not doing so, and cogent ones they were. Neither did she ask what had become of Blanche Venables, great friends as they once had been. Both husband and wife understood why silence on this subject was best.

So Glyn and his friends went on over the Theodule next day, and thus another effort to become great in art was frustrated.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BY THE SEA-SHORE.

It was evident to those who regarded the question indifferently, that old Mrs. Beverley's days were numbered. It is true she had rallied in the fresh pure air of Brighton ; but it was only for a time. The shock of recent events, acting on a comparatively weak constitution, had been too much for her. At the end of the second month by the sea-side Kate found, to her consternation, that her mother was scarcely stronger than she had been when they left town, and this could not go for any length of time.

Kate had a hard time, for she may be said to have had two invalids on her hands. Sib Maitland seemed almost stricken to death. She had never recovered from the shock of that letter, and of her own rash act. Her pretty pale face, paler now than ever, was like a lily struck by the cold winds of later spring. In one sense, her delicacy brought her relief, for it was a sufficient excuse for her to remain on with Kate. To her she still clung, as the one person in the world to whom she could open her heart and lay bare its secrets.

"Kate dear," said Mrs. Beverley one day, as she was being wheeled about in a bath chair, her daughter and Sib walking by her side, "I think this place is too much for me. There is such incessant bustle. All these carriages and people worry me sadly."

Kate had felt this for a long time, but they were still dependent on Glyn for ways and means ; and until his return she did not see her way to any change.

"We will see about a move when Glyn returns, dear," she answered.

"When do you think that will be?" questioned the old lady impatiently. "He seems to have been a long time abroad."

"The last we heard of them, you know, was from Zermatt. They did not know where they were going from there. I suppose we shall hear soon."

Laura had taken care that they should want for nothing while she was away. She had insisted on supplying Glyn with money for them. "You can pay me back when you return, and you get to work again,"

she said laughingly. "All you make can go to them now, if you are not too proud to live on me."

She had always been profuse, even lavish in her expenditure, so this proposition was nothing new. Indeed Glyn had no choice, but to accept the help now. He had sold his independence on his wedding day. At least until he should rise in his profession. If that ever came to pass the money would probably roll in fast enough, for our magnates in art build their palaces now and "dwell" literally in "marble halls."

Still Kate was not in a position to decide on any move, and she did not like to trouble Glyn with dismal accounts of her mother while he was on his wedding trip. She trusted that in change of scene he would find that cure for the heart-ache, from which she so well knew he had suffered ever since that letter came, which had wrought such disastrous consequences to both Glyn and Sib Maitland. So with growing anxiety Kate waited for her brother's return.

But a good angel was to drop down from the clouds, in the shape of Blanche Venables. The meeting with Glyn at Zermatt had roused her from the lethargy into which she had fallen after her father's death. Although an impassable barrier was set up between herself and Glyn, it was some relief to her to think that he was not unworthy of the love she had given him, that he had at least cleared himself from the suspicion of deceit and treachery. She could now dwell on the memory of those happy days at Lupton with a softened feeling towards him. Although she felt most acutely at times that—

"A sorrow's crown of sorrow is rememb'ring happier things."

she had not the additional sting of feeling "wroth with one we love," which indeed "works like madness on the brain."

Blanche came straight home after that meeting determined to face her sorrow with a brave heart. To one in her desolate position, it indeed required bravery to look with any degree of calmness on the future. No words can express the feelings which tortured her heart when she once more set foot on English soil and felt that she was not only fatherless, but, by some inexplicable treachery yet to be fathomed, had been robbed of the one to whom she would have clung in her bitter sorrow. Naturally her heart turned to Glyn's sister and to poor Sib Maitland. She might be of some use here, she thought, and so she went straight to Brighton.

She was shocked at the change in Sib. Scarcely less so at the condition of Mrs. Beverley. She took the physician aside and questioned him closely.

"I need not disguise the truth from you," the doctor said. "I do not think the old lady will live a month. I have not told her daughter. She will come to know it soon enough, poor girl. As to Miss Maitland, I don't know what to say. Miss Beverley tells me in

confidence, she has had some disappointment. She is delicate, undoubtedly, but people don't die of love, and she may get over it."

"But this gay place. Is it good for them?"

"I should certainly recommend a quieter place for Mrs. Beverley. A softer air would also I think be better for Miss Maitland. Her chest is delicate. Why not try Devonshire?"

The result of this conversation was that within a week, Blanche had carried them all off to the shores of Torbay. The soft air and cool breezes of Paignton, the pure blue sky, the freedom from noise and bustle were an infinite relief to the old lady, and even Sib seemed refreshed. She had always been a lover of nature, and, in her sad state of mind, the gaiety of Brighton had jarred upon her to a greater extent than even Kate had fancied.

"I want to ask you a question, Blanche," said Sib, a day or two after their arrival, as they were exploring the coast beyond Paignton.

They had walked over the breezy headland which lies between Paignton harbour and Goodrington, and had wandered on to the cliffs on the other side of the little bay.

Blanche had a dim consciousness of what was coming. "Let us sit down in this pretty little pebbly nook, then," she said. "We can talk here as long as we like without a chance of interruption. What a change from Brighton with its perpetual restless life. This is quite perfect."

It was indeed a lovely spot. Behind them, the broken irregular cliffs rose up to the grassy slopes which border the road to Dartmouth. At their feet the white, shelving pebbles, stretched downward to the sea, which lay palpitating in the noonday beams. There was just the quiver of a breeze on the surface, and where the tiny wavelets broke upon the strand, the sunshine glistened in points of diamond light. A short distance out, beds of dark seaweed were seen through the exquisite transparency of the water, turning it to a rich purple tint, and beyond, the sea deepened and deepened in tone until, on the far horizon, it turned to a pure cobalt, and cut the white summer clouds of the far distance with a distinct but beautifully softened line, broken only by the sails of distant ships, which loomed darkly against the radiance of the clouds. Away to the left, the red headland they had crossed stood up boldly, with a wealth of leafage on its crest, while to the right, the coast stretched away in a succession of woods and bluffs and pebbly bays toward the bold promontory of Berry Head.

Blanche had seated herself on the shingle. Sib lay half reclining against her and had taken her hand. The quiet of the spot was so intense that, but for the lapping of the waves, there was not a sound, and for a few moments neither spoke.

"Blanche, why did you not marry him?" Sib suddenly asked, without taking her dreamy gaze from the deep blue line of the horizon.

"Because I never had the slightest intention of doing so," Blanche answered.

"Then why did you write that letter?"

"I did not write it."

There was a sudden movement, and Sib looked up to her with wondering eyes.

"What do you mean?" she said.

"Before I answer you, will you tell me if you remember the contents of that letter very distinctly?"

"Yes, very distinctly—very distinctly indeed."

"Will you tell me what it contained word for word, as nearly as you can remember?"

"What a strange question for you to ask! You must know quite as well as I."

"For all that I do ask."

She took out a small pencil and pocket-book, and prepared to write.

"Now, Sib, I am going to put down your recollections of that letter, so be as accurate as you can."

"I am not likely to make any great mistake, but I cannot understand what you mean."

"No matter, I will explain by-and-by. How did it begin?"

"My dearest Laura."

"Well?"

Sib spoke with a great effort, but she went on.

"I can't give you the exact words, Blanche, only their purport. It went on to say, that after all the struggles you had gone through, you had at length made up your mind to marry Captain D'Eyncourt."

"Yes?"

Sib made another effort, and continued.

"That as your father had so set his heart on it, you felt you must yield, and that you thought you had judged George too harshly."

"Yes?"

"That he had been very devoted to you and, in deference to your father's wishes, you had consented that the marriage should take place soon."

"Is that all?"

"Except something about your going on to Naples, and a reference to your having loved him very dearly at one time," Sib answered in a faltering voice.

Blanche put up her pocket-book in which she had been making notes. "Sib, would you be surprised to hear that letter was a forgery?" she said.

"A forgery!" exclaimed her cousin, starting up. "Did he not ask you to marry him?"

"Yes—he asked me to marry him."

Sib sank down on the beach again, and a shudder swept over her.

"He has asked me many times," Blanche went on. "Of course he knew my dear father's wishes, and it was difficult to shake him off."

"But why would you not marry him? Laura told me you were once engaged to him. Why was it broken off?"

"Because I had reason to believe he was utterly false and bad. I have never changed that opinion. I wish you to think so too, Sib."

"No, no, do not say that. I would rather not think so. I would rather think you are mistaken—even now."

"One day I will tell why I think so."

"No, no, I do not care to hear. But about that letter—that dreadful letter. If you did not write it, who did?"

"I believe he did, but I do not know."

"You judge him very harshly, Blanche."

"I have reason to do so. You know how dearly I once loved him. How I gave him all the intense love of my then girlish heart. How the awakening from my dream seemed to change my very nature—for a time at least. He has been the one black spot on my life, for even now he has— Oh, Sib! if you are weak enough to love him after all I have said, after all he has done, I pity you from my inmost heart. My darling child, let me entreat you to root out every grain of fondness for him; for his love is simply pollution."

"Oh, Blanche, Blanche, you must not talk in this way. I cannot bear it."

Did she still think that he might come back to her, loving and penitent, some day in the far off future? Did she still make excuses for him and refuse to believe in his dishonour, in spite of all? Until his own lips confessed his falsehood, she could not bring herself to believe it. There must have been some strong motive which she did not know. He must love her still. If not, there was no truth in life. Poor Sib!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

TWO SAD HEARTS.

"I DON'T wish to awaken painful remembrances, Sib, but I do think it would be better if you would tell me all about it. I have long suspected there was something between you. I little thought how deeply your feelings were involved. Tell me when it first began."

"I do not mind telling you now that you know my secret. You do not know how it distressed me to keep it from you before. It was at the Fortescues' that it first began. There were a great many people there, but I found that Captain D'Eyncourt used to single me out and seemed to like talking to me better than to anyone else. I was very much surprised at first, but of course I could not help feeling flattered, and I soon grew to think more and more of him. I had never received such attention from anyone before. It seemed so strange to me, I was so young and he so courted by everyone. I

had never met anyone so clever or so handsome before. You may think how soon, how very soon, he won my heart."

Sib's head drooped lower and lower as she uttered these words. Her cousin passed her arm round her and held her in a close embrace.

"He told me that he loved me better than all the world, but that I must on no account, say a word as it would ruin his prospects with his uncle from whom he expected several thousands a year. This uncle he said, wished him to marry you. At any rate he was to make a good match, and the fact of marrying a penniless girl like me would be fatal."

"And at that very time he was trying his best to bring about the engagement with me again. I believe now that was merely for the sake of the money he knew I should have, for I have reason to think his affairs are in a sad state. Oh, it was shameful!"

"Do you mean that he wants money?" asked Sib, looking up quickly.

"Very badly, I believe."

Sib caught at another straw. He might have been driven by causes beyond his control to seek a rich wife. He might still love her better than anyone, but could not afford to marry her. It was attributing mean and sordid motives to him, but his love was what she craved. Sib's love was her "whole existence." If she once loved a man, she would have continued to love him even if he turned out to be a thorough-paced scoundrel.

"Do not let us talk any more about it, Blanche, I cannot bear it. Let me think as well of him as I can. It is wretchedness enough as it is."

She rose and began pacing along the beach towards the far end of the bay. Blanche did not follow. Perhaps she was half vexed that her words had failed in their effect. In her strong sense of rectitude she could not understand Sib's weaker nature which could feel no indignation even now, only cruel suffering.

Another sound broke upon Blanche's ear. The crunching of gravel beneath a man's heavy footstep. She looked up and her own heart stood still, for it was Glyn Beverley.

He came forward and shook hands without a word, then seated himself on the shingle by her side.

"You are surprised to see me," he said quietly.

Blanche could hardly find words to answer. The shock of this sudden meeting set her trembling in every limb. There was no delight. That was the pity of it. His presence now must always be pain to her.

"I am," she answered. "I thought you were abroad."

"I came back unexpectedly on some matters of business which I have to transact for my wife. I was bound to see my mother. I arrived an hour ago. I did not, of course, know, until I reached England, that you had taken possession of them. It is wonderfully kind of you, but that is only like you."

"Please do not say that. It is the least I could do after their kindness to Sib. Besides, you must not say such things to me now. I cannot bear it."

"No," said Glyn, laughing bitterly. "It is part of my penance that however much I may think of your goodness, I must hold my tongue. I shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing that my silence is not misconstrued. Shall I not?"

"Yes."

"Then I will try to be silent, whatever happens. I should not have come here now, only, as you were here, I thought it best to get this meeting over out here instead of in the house. Where is your companion? Oh, I see. I hope she is not meditating a second attempt out on the rocks there by herself."

The words were coarsely said—coming from Glyn they were so strange. Blanche looked at him in mute surprise. There was a hard cynical expression in his face which she had never seen there before, and now, for the first time, she noticed how the face was changed. There were set and rigid lines in it that told of days and nights of misery. There was a look of enmity with all outward things. Grief either debases or ennobs. With a sudden, sharp pang, Blanche felt that in this case it was the former.

"I do not like you to talk of her in that way," she said.

"Then I will not. It was a brutal remark, but the fact is, everything seems out of joint with me. I am not the same man I was, I know."

He began picking up pebbles and throwing them listlessly down into the water, which, all white and shining, came slowly up towards where they sat. The ineffable lustre of the sunlit waves seemed suddenly to strike him and arrested his hand.

"What marvellous beauty!" he exclaimed. "What *is* the meaning of this awful glory of the world with such darkened hearts to look upon it? Turn where we will there is nothing but beauty, nothing but sorrow. What can it mean?"

"You did not say that a few months ago. Our lives are not all dark. You forget the sunny spots in yours."

"They have been as brief as a gleam of sunshine. And what is my life now? So dark that those exquisite fleecy clouds, that pure azure sea, which would at one time have sent an absolute thrill of delight through me, are positive pain. I am not selfishly dwelling on my own grief only. Look at that poor girl yonder. What is her future? What yours?"

"The present is painful enough, Heaven knows; but I trust—God knows how sincerely I trust—to make the future at least bearable. Not the least part of my pain is to see you, who were so bright and trustful and happy, so changed."

"You have nothing to reproach yourself with in that. It was my

own headstrong folly. No one is to blame but myself, except that man who has brought evil on all of us."

"Have you seen him?"

"No."

"And you have discovered nothing about that letter?"

"There is nothing to discover. I am as certain that he wrote it as that I am sitting here. It has all come upon me like a revelation since I saw you last."

"In what way."

"He read your secret with regard to me. He thought that if I were disposed of and out of the way, he would have a better chance with you. Quite possibly he had also learned the widow's fondness for me. It was a neat little plot. If I felt you were lost to me, in a weak moment I might take the widow, and then his chance might come. This is the vague outline I have sketched. There are links wanting which I cannot yet discover; but he has succeeded—curse him."

"Surely he could not have plotted all this. It was so vague, so unlikely to happen. Besides, how could he have known so much?"

"Ah, there is the mystery I hope yet to fathom. How could he have known it? I have questioned my wife closely. I thought—heaven forgive me—that she might have been his accomplice."

"Oh, no, no!"

"It was a horrible thought, I admit, but I do not think so now. She has given me the most solemn assurances, otherwise I could not have lived with her another hour."

"But shall you see him?"

"I had intended to see him, but what would be the use? If I charged him with forging a letter to my wife, he would simply tell me that I lied, or would ask for proofs. I should have to confess that I had no proofs, only strong suspicions. He would tell me, in his insolent way, that suspicions did not affect him, and probably bid me good day. No, I must have firmer grounds before I charge him with this. He would turn the tables on me and probably laugh in my face."

"I think you are right. Besides, what is the use now? It would only make things more painful, and after all he has defeated his own ends, for I could never look upon his face again with any degree of patience. Do not let us talk of it, it is too painful."

"And yet to some extent it is a necessity. I feel better already for having talked the matter over with you. I will avoid the subject in future, unless I want your advice."

There was a pause of several minutes. The sea was up now, within a yard or two of their feet, turning the dry pebbles to glistening jewels, upon which the sunlight, shining through the water, played in a filigree of purest silver. Presently Blanche broke the silence.

"How did you know we were here? There was not time for you to have heard."

"I went direct from Folkestone to Brighton, and was astonished to find my mother had departed. You had left an address for the letters which they gave me. I heard you were with them. I concluded, therefore, it was your arrangement. Kate tells me it was. I don't know how to thank you sufficiently."

"Please don't say anything about that," she answered hurriedly. "Understand once for all that it will always be my greatest pleasure to do anything I can for them."

"Ah, that will be some relief to me at least, for I must return to Paris in a day or two."

"Your wife is there?"

"Yes. She has her new friends there and seems quite happy. At least, she was content for me to come alone—seemed to prefer it in fact. It would be a good thing if we could all take life so cheerily. This troublesome tide is as pertinacious as in the days of Canute. It *will* come on. We must shift our ground."

"We had better call Sib, I think. We ought to be returning."

"As you will. After all, I am glad you were here. I think you have done me good. I felt my very nature changing. My heart turning to gall and bitterness."

"Do not let that feeling come on you. There is but one course. To strive to do our best through all sufferings and temptations. I did not think we should meet again so soon. It was perhaps my own fault. I shall settle down at Lupton soon. I have not had the heart to go there yet. I must take Sib with me when I do."

"Kate will miss you very much."

"I shall be grieved to part with her, but it is a duty that must be faced. Perhaps if Mrs. Beverley gets better, they might all come to Lupton—at least as long as you are abroad."

"I should like to think they were with you; but I fear my mother will never be able to go. I was shocked at the change in her."

"I feared you would be. It struck me so, that I felt it was necessary to get her away from the noise of Brighton. She may however rally in this pure air."

"We will hope so. I should like the dear old lady to have a few happy months, after all her troubles."

"She shall, if it is in my power to bring it about. Here is Sib coming with wonderment in her eyes at your sudden appearance."

"Poor girl, she looks like a ghost," said Glyn. "Did he bring this trouble upon her for mere sport and pastime, I wonder, or is it possible that he really cared for her? You will keep her with you some time, I suppose."

"Oh yes, I hope so. They can hardly refuse me now, and she is

never very happy at home. I do so hope we may be able to have your mother and sister at Lupton."

But the "shadow feared by man," was at hand, and the girl's hope was never to be realised.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A DEATH-BED INJUNCTION.

As they approached the villa where they had taken rooms, a boy came running out to meet them.

"Oh, miss!" he cried, addressing Blanche, I was sent to fetch you. The lady is very bad."

They hurried into the house, and up the stairs. Kate met them on the landing with white cheeks and streaming eyes.

"Quick, Glyn. She is very ill. Blanche dear, it is better for you not to come."

Kate was right, for the sight which met Glyn's eyes, when he entered his mother's room, was enough to try even a strong man.

The old lady lay back on the pillow as white as marble, and all the coverlet was stained with blood.

"She has broken a blood-vessel. Send for the doctor, quick, Kate."

But Blanche, who anticipated the worst, from the scared look in Kate's face, had already gone. Luckily there was one close at hand, and in a few minutes he was in the sick-room.

Restoratives were applied, the patient carefully examined, and the bed rearranged as well as it could be, without disturbing the sufferer.

"Absolute quiet is necessary, and of course careful watching," said the doctor. "I can say nothing about the result yet. If her constitution is good, she may get over it; but it would be wrong to conceal the fact that she is in very great danger."

Kate wrung her hands.

"In immediate danger?" asked Glyn, concealing his emotion as well as he could.

"The next twenty-four hours will decide it, one way or the other. Attend carefully to my instructions. The ice is our sheet-anchor. Send for me at once if there is any return of the hemorrhage."

All individual heart-burnings were at an end in the imminent shadow of death. The four who were thus strangely linked together by the bed of sickness, vied with each other in the abnegation of self, and in the strong endeavour to comfort one another. The patient lay through the warm summer day, almost unconscious, and moaning piteously.

All that day and through the night Kate sat by her mother's bedside, while Glyn paced restlessly in the room below or snatched a few minutes' repose on a couch. Kate was deaf to all entreaties; she

would not leave the sick-room, although her two friends would have gladly relieved her. No hand but hers should administer the necessary cordials or arrange the mother's pillow.

The doctor's prediction was not actually verified. At the end of the twenty-four hours there was but little change. If anything the patient was weaker. She still lay with closed eyes, and the few low sounds which occasionally issued from her lips indicated that the poor overwrought mind was wandering.

Late that night Blanche entered the room.

"You must not watch through another night, Kate. You know how gladly I will take your place, and surely you can trust me, dear."

"I cannot leave until there is a change for the better."

"But you will wear yourself out. I do so wish you would get some rest. Your brother wishes it too."

"It is very good of you both, but you must not ask me. It is not that I do not trust you. I will promise you one thing. If she really sleeps as the doctor hopes, I will ask you to take my place for a little while."

"You promise me this?"

"Yes."

Blanche went downstairs. Glyn was at the door of the house which faced eastward and overlooked the sea. There was no moon, but the stars were shining in indescribable glory in the dark blue vault above. The sea lay in midnight slumber, with only a slight heave on its breast, like the breathing of a sleeper.

Instinctively these two, linked so strangely together by destiny, stepped on to the lawn and looked out over the silent sea.

"What does she say?" asked Glyn.

"She will not have any help now. She says if your mother sleeps she will let me take her place."

"And the mother?"

"Just the same, I think. How I wish I could comfort you, Glyn."

She had got this habit at times of unconsciously calling him by his Christian name. Each time she did so it sent a thrill through his heart; but this she did not know.

"Let us go out on to the beach for a bit. We shall be within call," he said.

It was only just across the garden. In a few seconds they were down close to the waves, which fell with a slow, melancholy lap, lap lap, upon the sand. "Take my arm," said Glyn.

She could not have refused him at such a time, so absolutely did she love him. She passed her small white hand softly through his arm.

They wandered away in silence. What could they say? There was nothing to be said in the utter hopelessness of the future, but that night with its stars, and dim grey sea, and lapping waves, was a vivid remembrance of their after lives.

At last she could bear it no longer. She felt her weakness, and dreaded the result. "Had we not better go in?" she said.

Glyn turned at once. "After all," he said, "it is better to understand each other, than to have lived on with bitter feelings in our hearts." Then they went back to the house.

At about two in the morning, Blanche was aroused by a light tap at her door, and the next moment Kate entered.

"She is sleeping so peacefully now that I thought I might venture to take a little rest," she said.

"Oh, I am so glad," Blanche answered. "I will go down at once."

Kate threw herself on her friend's bed. She was so worn out that she slept almost immediately. Blanche went to the sick-room. The patient was slumbering quite peacefully, but looked oh, so deadly white!

Half-an-hour after the door was quietly opened and Glyn stepped into the room. In the dim light he did not recognise the watcher by the bedside. He came forward softly and looked at his mother.

"Kate," he said, "I have come to insist on your getting some rest. I will stay here."

"Kate went up half-an-hour ago," Blanche said softly.

Glyn started. "Miss Venables! how good of you; but do let me relieve you. I cannot bear to think of your rest being broken."

"I shall not resign my post. You need rest more than I do. I shall think it unkind if you do not let me stay."

"I cannot refuse you. How peaceably she seems sleeping now. I do trust the crisis is past."

They stood on either side the bed, not far apart. A common bond of sympathy seemed to draw them more and more closely together. Suddenly the sleeper opened her eyes. She gazed at Glyn a moment, then at Blanche. Her lips seemed striving to utter some words.

"What is it, mother?" said Glyn, stooping over her.

"Your hand," she answered in so faint a voice that he could hardly hear. Glyn put his hand in hers. She held it fast in her poor attenuated fingers. Then she turned her eyes on Blanche, as if making a request.

Blanche took her other hand. A smile of contentment passed over the pale face. By a sudden action she brought together their two hands and pressed them both between her own. A ray of light seemed to pass over the poor clouded brain.

"Marry her, Glyn, marry her! God bless you both! and Kate."

The heart's intense desire spoke in that last supreme moment, but the worn brain was not clear enough to remember the one bitter obstacle. A merciful God had hidden it from her and had taken her to His rest in peace.

(To be continued.)

LORD CAMELFORD.

BY CHARLES BRUCE-ANGIER.

THOMAS PITT, second and last Lord Camelford in the Peerage of the United Kingdom, an officer in his Majesty's Navy, was born on 26th February, 1775, and the sad story of his wasted life and tragical end is one which cannot fail to awaken interest in readers of every rank ; for though largely gifted with good qualities, and placed high upon the platform of life, he chose to sacrifice himself to the waywardness of his disposition, and in the end fell a martyr to his own folly and eccentricities.

He was the great-grandson of Robert Pitt, the famous Governor of Madras, who, the best part of two centuries ago, founded the fortunes of the family by the advantageous purchase of a diamond superior in size to the Koh-i-noor, and said to be now worth 800,000*l.*, which he sold in Europe with great profit to the Duc d'Orleans, Regent of France. The subject of this sketch was moreover allied to some of the first families in the kingdom, his father, who was elevated to the Peerage in 1784, being nephew to the Earl of Chatham, the "great commoner," and his sister the wife of Lord Grenville. But he is chiefly remarkable for having assassinated an unresisting man ; for having set off to invade a great and warlike nation single-handed ; for having wrenched off many London door-knockers, beat many constables, fought a mob single-handed with a bludgeon, and for having mauled a gentleman without provocation and having to pay 500*l.* damages.

While yet a boy, though vigorous and manly, he was in spirit and temper peculiar and unmanageable ; indeed, all through his short though eventful career, he showed himself to be a singular compound of vices and virtues ; the sort of man who, though decorated with the "legion of honour" for his pluck and heroism, would be hung at Tyburn for his devilries. He received the first rudiments of his education under a tutor at Berne in Switzerland, from whose care he passed on to Charterhouse when about ten or twelve years old. But he did not stay there long, for nothing would satisfy this young cadet of nobility but the roving and adventurous life of a sailor.

It was no difficult matter for a cousin of the premier to obtain a commission ; so in the year 1789 we find him joining as midshipman the frigate *Guardian*, commanded by the gallant Captain Riou, and laden with stores for the then infant colony of convicts settled at Botany Bay. The ship met with misfortunes which were well calculated to inure the young seaman to the freaks of the element

which he had for a time chosen as his "stage." When all endeavours to save the vessel proved fruitless, and her commander gave the crew word to take to the boats, Lord Camelford was one of those who to the number of ninety resolutely resolved to remain in the ship and share the same fate as their gallant commander.

However, in the end, after an escape little short of a miracle, they got the wreck—for such she is described—to the Cape of Good Hope; and I need only say that thus early did Lord Camelford exhibit the same contempt for danger which marks his career throughout, and which more often savours rather of the nature of recklessness than of bravery.

In the September of 1790 he landed once more upon English soil, and undaunted by the hardships and dangers he had undergone, young Pitt posted straight up to London, where he waited upon my lords of the Admiralty, and bringing his family influence to bear upon them, ultimately obtained an appointment to join an exploring voyage then fitting out under Captain Vancouver. He accompanied that officer in the ship *Discovery*, but in consequence of his perverseness and disobedience to orders, the result of his wayward and obstinate temper, he put his commander under the necessity of treating him with a severity which our friend would not endure; so that in the end he said good-bye to the *Discovery* in the Indian Seas, and joined the *Resistance* under Sir Edward Pakenham, where he gained the rank of lieutenant.

It was while serving on board this ship that he heard the news of his father's death, by which event a coronet and 20,000*l.* a year became his.

On returning to England in the October of 1796, he immediately sent a challenge to Captain Vancouver for the alleged ill-treatment he had received while serving under him. Vancouver was then retired and in poor health. But as a man of the world he appealed to the young man's reason, and urged the necessity of discipline on board ship. He even offered to submit the case to any flag-officer in the navy, and said that if the referee should decide this to be an "affair of honour," he would go out with Lieutenant Camelford.

Camelford probably thought it would be as well to leave "honour" out of the question, for he did not accept the Captain's proposal. The wound, however, rankled deep in his breast, and he waited his opportunity, which in due course arrived. Meeting Vancouver one day in Bond Street, Lord Camelford insulted and tried to strike him. Had he been a plain Lieutenant Jones, or Smith, or Brown, he would no doubt have been cashiered for disrespect, but he was a Pitt, and cousin to the First Lord of the Treasury—in those days a very awful personage—who wore a blue riband, and was respected accordingly, and Captain Vancouver could do nothing. It is said that the mortification and the humiliation of the outrage so preyed upon the mind of this deserving officer and distinguished navigator, that in the

end it shortened his life, and he died of grief and chagrin instead of a pistol-shot.

Soon after this episode Lieutenant Camelford attained the rank of commander, and was appointed to the sloop *Favourite* on the West Indian station, though I fear he had yet to learn how to command himself.

On January 13th, 1798, that vessel and the *Perdrix* were lying at anchor in the harbour of Antigua, and it so happened that the captain of the latter was absent at St. Kitt's, and had left his lieutenant, a Mr. Peterson, in charge of the *Perdrix*. Lord Camelford, who was consequently pro tempore senior officer at the English harbour, issued some trifling order which Mr. Peterson did not think necessary to obey. High words ensued, and Peterson armed several of his crew and placed himself at their head with a drawn sword.

Lord Camelford, who seems to have had a decided penchant for summary disciplinarianism, called out his marines, boarded the *Perdrix*, and having asked Peterson if he meant to obey his order, and receiving an answer in the negative, he immediately retired, but soon returned with a pistol, and coming up to Peterson with it said again, "Lieutenant Peterson, do you still persist in not obeying my order?" "Yes, my lord," said Peterson, "I do persist." Thereupon Lord Camelford placed his pistol to Peterson's breast and shot the unfortunate man dead on the spot.

This event excited the utmost indignation in Antigua, for Lieutenant Peterson was much beloved; indeed Lord Camelford was only saved from being torn to pieces by surrendering himself to Captain Matson of the *Beaver* sloop, who placed him under arrest pending his trial by court-martial. The coroner's jury gave the cavalier verdict that Peterson had "lost his life in a mutiny"; but Camelford was taken to Martinique, where a court-martial sat on him, which, however, in due course "honourably" acquitted him, and so the matter dropped. Again, it was not a Jones or a Smith or a Brown, but a Pitt that had shot the lieutenant, and the Pitts were a "heaven-born race"; and just as "sin is not sin in a duchess," so was it equally certain that "killing was no murder" when wrought by a peer of the realm in the good old days before the Corsican adventurer upset the nobility and gentry of the world.

But I doubt if the same law would hold good now as that which prevailed a hundred years ago in the history of the British navy when our grandfathers were young men.

Though Camelford after his acquittal resumed his naval duties, so many officers looked coldly upon this one-sided disciplinarian that he resigned his ship and retired from active service. While in the Service it was his good pleasure to cut as rusty and eccentric a figure as marked his conduct through life. He would not wear epaulettes, but went about in an old lieutenant's coat, the buttons of which were "as green with verdigris as the ship's bottom itself." Nor was this

all, for his head was shaved close and he wore an extravagant-looking gold-laced cocked hat. At the same time it is pleasant to record that though so severe a disciplinarian, he was particularly attentive to the comforts of the men, and very humane to the sick.

He was also well versed in mathematical science and theology; we are told that he studied the former in order to make himself a good captain, and the latter to enable him to puzzle the ship's chaplains, who were not in those days particularly remarkable for profound research.

He had not long returned to England when he took it into his hair brain to plan one of his mad freaks, which if he had managed to put into execution would probably have cost him his life. His plan was to repair to Paris, and once in that city, to attack personally and slay messieurs of the Republic *pour encourager les autres*. With this object in view, he took coach to Dover, where he cajoled a boatman with the tempting bait of twelve guineas and the polite fiction that he had some watches and muslins which he was anxious to dispose of in Calais, to convey him across the channel, though at that time so stringent was the law that it was nothing short of a capital offence to effect an embarkation to France.

The skipper of the boat having pocketed the twelve guineas betrayed him to a local collector of the revenue, who arrested his lordship in the act of stepping into the boat. And the triumphant collector lost no time in carrying him back to town in a post-chaise, under a strong guard, in order to be dealt with by the Privy Council. When taken, they found on him a brace of pistols, a two-edged dagger, and a letter of introduction in French. On his arrival at Whitehall, a Privy Council was immediately summoned, who recognised our hero, while Mr. Pitt despatched a messenger to Camelford's brother-in-law, Lord Grenville, requesting him to come to town immediately.

After several examinations his lordship was for the second time in his life discharged from custody. The Lords of the Council being satisfied that however irregular his conduct, his intentions were only such as he had represented them to be, and he had no other object in view than that of rendering a service to his country. His Majesty's pardon was therefore issued under the great seal.

This occurred in January, 1799, and at least two months seem to have elapsed before Lord Camelford's name was again brought before the public, though he continued to live on in London indulging himself by day and night in a series of endless skirmishes with constables, and in wrenching off numberless London door-knockers.

On the night of April 2nd, 1799, we find him causing a riot at the box office during the representation of "The Devil to Pay," breaking the windows and the chandeliers in the boxes, and insulting and mauling a gentleman named Humphreys without provocation. His lordship was by this time so well-known to the constables of the night, that they took his word for his appearance next morning at the police office in Bow Street. Though he denied the charge, and asserted that Mr.

Humphreys had first assaulted him, he was not believed by the magistrates. Lord Camelford then tendered an apology which also was not accepted by the indignant Humphreys, who, as he had been twice knocked down the steps into the hall, and had suffered several violent blows in the face, sued the offender for damages, so that "My Lord" had to answer for his conduct at the Westminster Sessions, and although he engaged for counsel the services of Mr. Thomas Erskine, afterwards Lord Chancellor, he found the jury less pliable than captains in a secret tribunal, and Humphreys obtained a verdict and 500*l.*

On another occasion when he and his boon companion, Captain Barrie, were returning home late one night, or rather early one morning, as they passed through Cavendish Square they found the "Charleys" asleep. Of course they woke them up, which was all very right, and thrashed them, which was all very wrong. At last the "Charleys" sprang their rattles, whereupon other more vigilant guardians of the night rushed upon the scene, and "my lord" and his friend, finding themselves overpowered by ten to two, laid down their arms and were as usual led off to the station-house. Next morning they were brought before his worship, where a present of sundry guineas to the injured "Charleys" enabled the sitting magistrate to admonish the delinquents with great good sense and eloquence, and in the end discharge them.

Many a night was passed in the watch-house, when he might have been lying in luxury in the best bed-chamber of Camelford House, Park Lane, or at least in his Bond Street lodgings. On such occasions he generally prevailed—being of a persuasive nature—upon the constable of the night to resign his place to him. He would then, with the utmost gravity, examine all the delinquents which were brought in by the watch, and rejoiced in the opportunity of exercising the benevolence of his disposition by invariably discharging the offenders.

Such was Lord Camelford's night work; and although he so often spent those quiet hours in administering black eyes to many, this eccentric creature in the day-time was often to be found engaged in relieving the necessities of many. He was, as before mentioned, a curious mixture of vices and virtues, of studiousness and recklessness. We read in the columns of the "Gentleman's Magazine" that Lord Camelford was not only inclined to the more enlightened pursuits of literature, but his chemical researches were worthy of the highest praise. Sometimes he exhibits traces of a tender heart and of being singularly benevolent and forgiving; at other times he is unreasonably vindictive and barbarous. It was hard to predict what he would do or say on any given occasion, but the chances were it would be something with a strong flavour, good or bad.

Such a character in fiction would be pronounced incredible; yet such characters are not entirely unknown even in Biblical history. There was nothing which delighted him more than to stand out in direct contrast to the general public and find himself in a minority of

one. In the House of Lords no doubt he would have been often able to gratify this whim ; but, like certain noblemen of our own day, he had the good taste not to take his place as an "hereditary legislator"; indeed throughout his short career he rather shunned the "society of his peers," preferring instead the "ignoble vulgus" of the London streets.

In 1801, when all London was lit up in celebration of the return of peace, no persuasions would induce him to allow lights to be placed in the windows of his apartments, which were over a grocer's shop in Bond Street, though he had previously wished to go to Paris to end the war with a single blow. In vain did the grocer and his wife protest ; in vain did his friends try their persuasion ; he continued inexorable, and throughout the evening remained firm to his silly and wayward resolve. So, though all London was illuminated, Camelford's windows remained dark as pitch.

This kind of thing was at that time always bitterly resented by a London mob. The canaille collected, and by way of preliminary saluted his windows with a shower of stones. Irritated by this treatment, the pugnacious peer sallied out, carrying a formidable bludgeon, and single-handed laid about him right and left. But the mob had cudgels too, and proceeded to show his lordship that they also knew how to use those weapons. They belaboured him thoroughly, and in the end knocked him down and proceeded to roll him in the gutter. But the next night his windows were as dark as ever, though he had taken the precaution to fill the house with a party of armed sailors, and it seemed likely that the festivities attending the welcome peace would be the cause of yet more bloodshed. Fortunately the mob were in a good temper, or content with having thrashed him once ; at any rate, he was left this time to mourn, or rather curse, alone the national weakness in coming to terms with "Bony."

The fact that he always showed an uncommon affection for his sister's two children proves that his character was not destitute of amiable qualities. For the gratification and amusement of these boys, he gave them a couple of ponies, and it was one of his favourite recreations to take them out riding. On these little expeditions if he perceived any labourers at work, he used to stop and engage them in conversation, and always made it his business to find out their circumstances, difficulties, and little family secrets. Never on these occasions did distress plead in vain, and he seldom parted from those whom he considered deserving objects of his bounty, without leaving behind some substantial mark of his favour. It was also his custom in order to test the disposition of his so-called friends, to occasionally represent himself as being greatly in want of money, and to request the loan of one or two thousand pounds. Some of those to whom he applied gave him the required sum, which he generally returned in the course of a few days with a note of explanation.

His name was a terror to fops, for though Camelford House at the

top of Park Lane was nominally his town residence, he lived chiefly in his bachelor quarters, or at clubs, and coffee-houses, where he would often go shabbily dressed to read the paper.

One day it chanced that a dashing beau full of airs and graces came into the same box in a coffee-house in Conduit Street, which Camelford was fond of frequenting, and threw himself into the opposite seat, at the same time calling out in a most consequential tone, "Waiter, bring a pint of Madeira, and a couple of wax candles." Meanwhile, he drew Lord Camelford's candle towards himself, and began to read. The former glared at the intruder, but said nothing. In the course of a few minutes the buck's candles and wine were brought and set out in the next box into which he presently lounged. Then Camelford, mimicking his tone called out: "Waitaa, bring me a pair of snuffaas." These being brought his lordship walked round with them to the other box, snuffed out both candles and leisurely returned to his seat. "Waitaa, waitaa, waitaa," roared the indignant beau boiling and blustering with rage, "who is this fellow that dares thus to insult a gentleman? who is he? who is he?"

"Lord Camelford, sir!" said the waiter.

"Lord Camelford!" returned the former in horror-stricken accents. "*Lord Camelford!* What have I to pay?" And he immediately laid down his score, and stole away leaving his Madeira untasted.

At length Lord Camelford's irritable disposition, which had already involved him in endless quarrels and disputes, paved the way to the tragic ending of a life which was such a strange compound of good and bad.

It would appear that for some time he had been *épris* of a certain lady of the name of Simmons. One day early in 1804, some officious retailer of gossip represented to the touchy nobleman that a certain Mr. Best had said something to his prejudice to this woman. The inflammable nobleman immediately took fire, so that happening to meet this Mr. Best on the 6th of March at the "Prince of Wales" coffee-house, Lord Camelford went up to him and said loud enough to be heard by all present: "I find, sir, that you have spoken of me in the most unwarrantable terms." Mr. Best quietly replied, "that he was quite ignorant of anything to deserve such a charge;" Camelford replied that he knew otherwise, and called him "a scoundrel, a liar, and a ruffian."

After making use of such epithets as these, there was—according to the code of honour of those days—but one course open to Mr. Best. A meeting was proposed for the following morning, and each of the parties having appointed his second, it was left to them to arrange the time and place, which was accordingly fixed to take place at 7 o'clock in a meadow behind Holland House.

Meantime every means was used to prevent the necessity of a duel, and it certainly seems to have been entirely Lord Camelford's fault that the affair was allowed to be proceeded with. In the course of

the evening, Mr. Best, although he had been so grossly insulted, sent to his lordship the strongest assurance that the information he received was unfounded, and that as Lord Camelford had acted under a false impression he would be quite satisfied if his lordship would withdraw the strong epithets which he had used. But Lord Camelford was too proud to accept this kindly and sensible offer.

Meanwhile the proprietors of the coffee-house and some mutual friends among the bystanders lodged an information at Marlborough Street, but though the magistrates were thus early let into the secret, it appears that according to the usual dilatoriness with regard to such matters (as in the case of the celebrated duel between Lord Mohun and the Duke of Hamilton, nearly a century before that) no steps were taken to prevent the encounter until too late.

Not until nearly two o'clock in the morning did any of the Marlborough Street emissaries reach Lord Camelford's door, by which time the bird had flown. For his Lordship, who had gained no little experience in matters of honour, had taken good care to "efface" himself from his Bond Street lodging, and slept the night instead at a tavern in Oxford Street.

He employed the quiet hours of this his last night upon earth in making his will, bequeathing his estates to his sister, Lady Grenville. In this he inserted a clause which proves him to have done at least one just and noble act, for in it he wholly acquits his antagonist of blame by a positive statement that he was the aggressor in every sense. "Should I therefore lose my life in a contest of my own seeking, I most solemnly forbid my friends or relations from instituting any vexatious proceeding against my antagonist;" and he further adds that if, "notwithstanding the above declaration, the laws of the land be put in force against him, I desire that this part of my will may be made known to the king."

Early the following morning Mr. Best called at the coffee-house in Oxford Street, where he made a last effort to prevail upon his lordship to retract the expressions he had used. "Camelford," said he, "we have been friends, and I know the generosity of your nature. Upon my honour you have been imposed upon by Mrs. Simmons. Do not insist on using expressions which in the end may cause the death of either you or me."

To this Lord Camelford replied with some emotion, "Best, this is child's play; the thing must go on." Yet in his own heart he acquitted Mr. Best, for he acknowledged in confidence to his second that he was in the wrong. The reason of all this obstinacy probably lay in the fact that Best had the credit of being a fatal shot, and Camelford fancied his reputation might suffer if he made a concession, however slight, to such a person.

Unable to come to terms the two principals mounted their horses and rode along the Uxbridge Road, past the wall which then bounded Kensington Gardens and so came to the "Horse and Groom," a little

beyond Notting Hill turnpike-gate. At the "Horse and Groom" they dismount, cross the road, and proceed at a rapid pace along the path towards the fields at the back of Holland House. It was now about eight o'clock, and the sun had just risen upon a wild March morning, the seconds measured the ground and placed their men at a distance of thirty paces. One or two of Lord Holland's outdoor servants were up and about the grounds, but while they stood and stared, the signal was given and Lord Camelford fired first and missed. A quarter of a minute more, Best hesitated, and some think he even now asked his adversary to retract, but the signal was repeated, and he fired, whereupon Lord Camelford was seen to fall at full length to the ground. But he was not dead yet, though he would never stand again, and oh ! irony of ironies, he declared that he "was satisfied."

They all ran to pick him up, and he gave his hand to his antagonist, saying, "Best, I am a dead man, and though you have killed me I fully forgive you ; it was not your fault."

The report of firearms had alarmed several other persons, so that Best was obliged to seek safety in flight. One of the gardeners was sent for a surgeon, and a sedan chair was soon procured, in which Lord Camelford was carried off to Little Holland House, where he was attended by two surgeons, an express being sent off to his brother-in-law, Lord Grenville, and to his cousin the Rev. Mr. Cockburn. He was put to bed and his clothes cut off him, but from the first the surgeons gave no hope, for the bullet was buried in the body and could not be extracted, and the lower limbs were paralyzed by its action.

He lingered in great agony for three whole days, when mortification set in and put an end to his sufferings. Thus died Thomas Pitt Lord Camelford at the early age of twenty-nine, in the prime and full vigour of manhood, by a death entirely due to his own wilful obstinacy and foolish pride.

To his cousin, Mr. Cockburn, who remained with him until he expired, he is said to have spoken with deep contrition of his past life, and in the moments of his greatest pain cried out that he sincerely hoped the agonies he then endured might expiate the sins he had committed.

"I wish," says Mr. Cockburn, "with all my soul, that the unthinking votaries of dissipation and infidelity could have been present at the death-bed of this poor man, could have heard his expressions of contrition and of reliance on the mercy of his Creator ; could have heard his dying exhortation to one of his intimate friends, to live in future a life of peace and virtue. I think it would have made an impression on their minds, as it did on mine, not easily to be effaced."

He was a man, says Cockburn, whose real character was but little known to the world ; his imperfections and his follies were often brought before the public, but the counterbalancing virtues he manifested were but little heard of. Though violent to those whom he imagined

to have wronged him, yet to his acquaintances he was mild, affable and courteous; a stern adversary, but the kindest and most generous of friends. That warmth of disposition, which prompted him so unhappily to great improprieties, prompted him also to the most lively efforts of active benevolence. From the many prisons in the metropolis, from the various receptacles of human misery, he received numberless petitions; and no petition ever came in vain. He was often the dupe of the designing and crafty suppliant, but he was more often the reliever of real sorrow, and the soother of unmerited woe. Constantly would he make use of that influence which rank and fortune gave him with the government to interfere on behalf of those malefactors whose crimes had subjected them to punishment; but in whose cases appeared circumstances of alleviation. He was passionately fond of science, and though his mind, while a young seaman, had been little cultivated, yet in his later years he had acquired a prodigious fund of information, upon almost every subject connected with literature. In early life he had gloried much in puzzling the chaplains of the ships in which he had served, and to enable him to gain such triumphs, he had read all the sceptical books he could procure, and thus his mind became involuntarily tainted with infidelity. But as his judgment grew more matured, he discovered of himself the fallacy of his reasonings, and the folly of living an irreligious life.

On the day after his death, an inquest was held upon his body, when, strange as it may sound to those who have read this brief history, twelve wise and enlightened inhabitants of the rural village of Kensington, for such it was when George III. was King, unanimously returned a verdict of "Wilful murder," against some person or persons unknown.

It is evident from all I have said, that Lord Camelford had in him the elements of a good naval officer; but he was proud, and obstinate beyond measure, and never could be brought to bow to the rules and requirements of the service. From a child he would not obey or be amenable to reason; he delighted to set all authority at defiance; at school it was the same, afterwards in the Navy; and he was true to his character to the very last. The day before his death he wrote or rather dictated a codicil to his will. In it he requests his relations not to wear mourning for him, and then gives particular instructions as to the disposal of his remains after death.

In this remarkable document he prefaced his wish by the statement that while other persons desired to be buried in their native land however great the distance might be, he on the contrary wished to be interred in a distant land. "I wish my body," says he, "to be removed as soon as may be convenient, to a country far distant, to a spot not near the haunts of men, but where the surrounding scenery may smile upon my remains." He then went into details. This place was by the lake of St Pierre, in the canton of Berne, in Switzerland, and the exact spot was marked by three trees. He

desired that the centre tree might be taken up, and his body placed in the cavity, and that no monument or stone might mark the place. He then gave a reason for this selection: "At the foot of this tree I formerly passed many hours in solitude contemplating the mutability of human affairs;" and as a compensation, he left the proprietors of the spot described, 1000*l*. That at eleven years of age he or any other boy should have meditated under trees upon the "mutability of human affairs," is nonsense. He was meditating upon that subject as he lay a-dying, and it was then that he remembered the green meadows, the blue lake, and the peaceful hours in the place where he had spent his innocent childhood, when he little dreamed that he should kill poor Peterson by a pistol-shot, and be killed by a pistol himself in retribution.

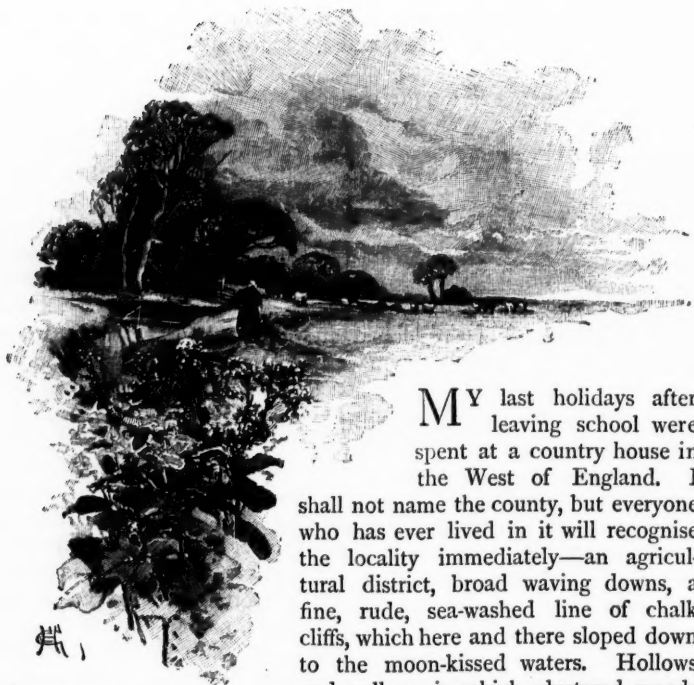
But in this matter of the disposal of his remains he was not destined to have his own way. The body was removed the day after his death from Kensington to Camelford House, and thence on the 17th March it was taken and placed within the vaults of St. Anne's, Soho, beside the coffin which held the remains of Theodore, King of Corsica, pending its removal to Switzerland: for preparations had actually been made to carry out Lord Camelford's wishes. He was embalmed and his remains packed up for transportation in an enormously long fish-basket in place of a shell. But at the last moment, when all was ready, war was again proclaimed and the body was unable to be transported. It was thereupon placed temporarily in a magnificent coffin ornamented with a profusion of silver clasps and covered with rose-coloured velvet and surmounted by a coronet, and with the following inscription: "The Right Hon. Lord Camelford, died 10th March, 1804, aged 29 years." His body still lies where it was first temporarily interred, for the war lasted a long while, and at its close Lord Camelford's remains were forgotten, and there seems never to have been any further attempt to carry out the testamentary wishes of the deceased peer. Many persons have actually been shown by former vergers of St. Anne's what purported to be the coffin containing all that remained of Lord Camelford, probably fish-basket and all, but of late years the vaults under the church have been filled with sawdust. There he most probably will remain until the "last trumpet shall sound" buried in sawdust, alongside the coffin of that other eccentric individual, the adventurer, Theodore, King of Corsica. At any rate, there seems little chance that he will ever rest in the romantic spot he fancied, and paid for.

His fine property of Boconnoc Park, Cornwall, he bequeathed to his sister Anne, Lady Grenville, who was his sole executrix. He also left considerable sums to be devoted to charitable purposes. Lady Grenville outlived her brother sixty years, dying in full possession of her faculties, at the age of ninety in the year 1863.

SUMMER AT ASHFURLONG.

BY THE LATE ROSA MACKENZIE KETTLE

I.



MY last holidays after leaving school were spent at a country house in the West of England. I shall not name the county, but everyone who has ever lived in it will recognise the locality immediately—an agricultural district, broad waving downs, a fine, rude, sea-washed line of chalk cliffs, which here and there sloped down to the moon-kissed waters. Hollows and valleys, in which clustered woods are gathered in snug shelter from the tempests which rave and roar over the heights, square-towered churches, flourishing farms, picturesque but dilapidated cottages, fierce quarrels among fox-hunting gentry, and, in the more remote corners, hospitable jovial parsons, who follow the hounds and drink their claret at the squire's table still as in the days of old.

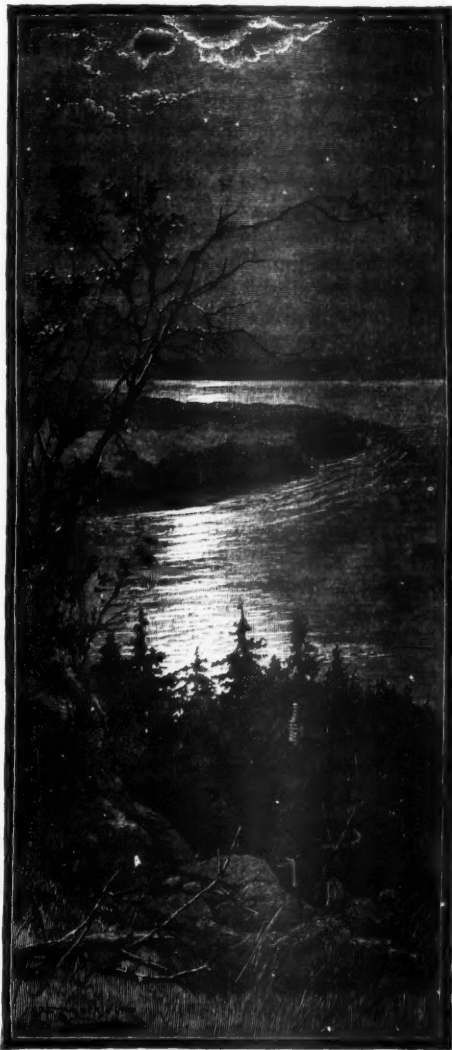
It was very cold as we drove over the bleak hills. I was glad when we came in sight of the pretty town, on the banks of a river, where our friend's carriage was to meet us. Dark, too, except where patches of pale moonlight glimmered through the trees of a noble domain, then rested white on the face of the water as we crossed the

bridge. A halt to set down outside passengers, and then the horse-hoofs clattered over the pavement of the county town, eight miles from our journey's end.

It is a long time since this happened. I am a woman now; I felt like one then. Clara Dalzell, my companion, was not much older, but we neither of us liked to be taken for what we did not consider ourselves to be; and when a merry manly voice exclaimed, "Where are the children?" we both roused ourselves and strove to look dignified.

In front of the hotel, in a wide open space brightly illuminated by the moonlight, stood a brake with two white prancing horses, which required a man at each side to restrain them. The driver, a gentleman in a light summer suit, had dismounted and come round to look for "the children," as he had affrontingly designated us. His attention had been for a moment distracted by the sight of our luggage, and he was giving rapid orders for the transference and arrangement of our numerous boxes, whilst we jumped out of the coach without waiting for his assistance.

I heard Clara's low sobs as she threw herself into his arms, and



"CHALK CLIFFS, WHICH HERE AND THERE
SLOPED DOWN TO THE MOON-KISSED WATERS."

saw him kiss her with fond affection, although there were persons standing by; but everyone knew that they were nearly related, and that she had strong claims upon his sympathy. Hers was the story of hundreds of poor girls at this day. Her father, Sir Marmaduke Dalzell's only brother, a brave officer, after spending more than half his life in India, and devoting himself to the charge of the regiment of native troops, which he believed would prove faithful to him in any emergency, had been shot down by his own ungrateful soldiery—by the men whom he had led over and over again to victory. After a harrowing period of suspense Mrs. Dalzell learnt that she was a widow. After some weeks of illness, following the terrible shock, she died. Clara had been brought up by her father's family at the old house among the Western downs towards which we were now journeying together. She had suffered so much from her cruel bereavement that it had been thought expedient to give her an entire change of scene, and she had been placed at the establishment in London where I had been educated. For the last twelve months we had been schoolfellows.

Perhaps Sir Marmaduke's heart was softened by the orphan's embraces. Probably, in the moonlight, tired and pale as I was, he still considered me a child. Be that as it may, he lifted me in his strong arms into the carriage and took his place on the box. With a plunge on the part of the horses, and a word or two spoken by him in a caressing tone, which calmed their impetuosity, we were off from the inn door like a shot.

Down through deep wooded dells, through miry lanes with high hedges garlanded with clematis, over the crests of hills which seemed to rise from the plains, spread over with sheets of dewy moonlight, like island peaks out of seas and lakes, past twinkling lights gleaming from the windows of halls and cottages, with trees gathered thickly about them—we dashed on at the same pace up hill, down dale.

Clara shivered, for the carriage was quite open, and we were rather insufficiently guarded from the cold of the misty night; but my heart expanded. I loved the dewy landscape, the great mountainous downs, with their undulating lines marked against the sky, and the stars shining above them, the deep bowery lanes, and the English homes, lying safe each within its own enclosure, whether of park-fence or hedge-row, glancing lights often reflecting themselves in the water, for more than once we crossed the river, which wound in and out among the hills and under the trees that filled up the sheltered parts of that beautiful valley.

Clara was quite silent. She knew that she was going home—the only home she had ever known. But there was no loving mother, no proud, rejoicing father to receive her. Away in that devastated land, under sweeping dust-storms, was the brave soldier's grave. Home, though she loved her kindred, seemed desolate to her now.

At last the carriage stopped. "Take care of the boughs," was

utered just in time as the drooping branches of the old ash-trees swept over us. The tall form on the box bent very low ; we were quite in darkness for several moments, then a turn in the drive, and the Hall, with lights in every window, and a high shadowy hill rising behind it, bare at the top, but with woods climbing half-way to its summit, lay in the hollow of a wooded park at a short distance from us.

It was quite evident that we had reached our destination. Our pace, fast before, quickened. We dashed up to the hall-door, which was opened instantly. Servants came from the stables to the horses' heads. A blaze of light dazzled me as once more I was lifted stiff and weary from my seat. I do not think that at that moment I could have descended without assistance. My hand was held for an instant in a warm kindly grasp. Hurrying forms seemed to cross each other like spectres in the bright light, where as yet my eyes could scarcely distinguish a single object. I was wishing myself back in the dark road with flashes of moonlight crossing it, when the only voice excepting Clara's that I had ever heard before—which strange as it was to me an hour ago, seemed now to sound familiarly—welcomed me in hearty tones, which yet had a soft and kindly modulation, to Ashfurlong.

II.

AN hour before the dawn I woke suddenly. The room in which I was sleeping was still dark, and I fancied that it was the closing of the door of communication between my sleeping chamber and Clara's which had disturbed me. Gradually the early summer morning broke. It occurred to me that my friend might be as restless as myself. When I sprang up and looked into her apartment it was empty.

The breeze was blowing in through an open glass-door which, by a long flight of steps, communicated with the garden. Clara had evidently gone out that way, and the sounds I had heard so lately convinced me that she had not left her room many minutes. I hastily finished dressing myself, put on my hat and cloak, and followed her. I did not know the hour, but the air was so chilly and the light so dim that I perceived it must be very early.

A slight form, far in advance of me, relieved against the grey sky above the top of the hill, up which the shady walk was conducted, lured me on. When I reached the spot it was gone. I stopped for a moment to recover my breath, for I had run the whole way, and to see where I was most likely to find my friend.

The prospect from the brow of the hill was a very extensive one. Wood, water, hill and valley, lay sleeping in dewy indistinctness before me. The country landscape, with soft undulating lines of downs sinking into green fields, and intercepted by copses, was very

pleasant to look upon. In the centre of thick plantations, with smoke faintly rising from its many chimneys, denoting that already the household was astir, I saw a large mansion. Not far off a hoary ruin, with its majestic square keep and battlemented towers wreathed with ivy, lay deeply buried among trees. I heard the faint sound of a bell, very sweet and low in tone, issuing from the side farthest from me of the old house among the woods, and I saw the same dark-robed form which had been visible for a moment on the hill-top hurrying along a path through the meadows below me.

Just then a gush of the sweetest melody I ever heard was borne past me by the morning wind. I knew that it was a Roman Catholic chaunt—part of a solemn mass. Clara stopped, and then walked on very quickly, but not alone. I saw another figure close beside hers in the pathway. Some instinctive feeling forbade my watching them. I turned back and went straight to my own room, where I lay down till it was time to re-arrange my dress for breakfast.

III.

LATER in the day we were all gathered together under the stern old ruin which I had seen at a distance in the cold light of early morning. Now the sun was high in heaven. Broad boughs of magnificent cedar-trees stretched across us, shading our rural banquet. Above us loomed the dark walls which had withstood the assault of Cromwell's Ironsides. Still, though rent and riven, and knit together in many places only by the ivy, they had an appearance of strength. Deep woods closed in on every side, leaving only a small space open round the ruin which sprang up abruptly to a great height from the sward. Perhaps in former days it occupied a wider circuit, but now all the crumbling fragments had been removed; carefully tended walks and smoothest grass wound round and in and out among trees. It was difficult even to gain a view of the building from any distance, unless it was as I had seen it when I looked down upon the old castle from the summit of the hill behind Ashfurlong.

Clara was near me. I had asked her no questions about her walk, neither had she mentioned it to me. For the moment I had forgotten it, but the sight of the ruins, when, to my complete surprise, after a circuitous drive we came upon them, recalled the impression they had made upon me in the morning.

The words that brought the colour to her cheek, and made her involuntarily look at me, were spoken by Sir Marmaduke.

"You must see the chapel, that is if we are permitted to inspect it. A large sum has been expended on its renovation. The carving of the interior is like delicate lace-work. I believe, however, that the time to see it to advantage is when it is lighted up for the early morning service at five o'clock. That would not suit my lazy niece.

She is always too late for breakfast and does not understand the meaning of punctuality."

Clara looked at me imploringly. There was no necessity for her uneasiness. I felt no inclination to betray her, but I am sure she guessed that I was in possession of part at least of her secret.

"Why do you blush so deeply, Miss Ogilvie, I hope you are not a pervert. There have been a great many lately in this part of the country."

Sir Marmaduke looked grave, and stopped abruptly. I could not move from my embarrassment. Clara by this time was talking calmly to her next neighbour.

"You are an early riser," my host said after a momentary pause. "Did you not sleep? What took you out of my house before sunrise. I do not like my little girls to wander about alone in the twilight; I should not approve of it in Clara, and she is older than you are, and not such a stranger in this part of the country. Depend upon it, eight o'clock is quite early enough for any young lady to be abroad, particularly after a long journey. Will you not tell me why you went out alone and so early?"

He looked at me searchingly. I would have given the world not to blush, but I felt myself crimson under his gaze. What could I say? I had certainly gone out before five o'clock in the morning, and he did not accuse me of any further indiscretion, yet I felt certain that his thoughts went beyond the mere fact of a school-girl's early rising. If I excused myself, I feared lest I should inculpate Clara. After all, what did it matter to me what her relations thought of my conduct? To the poor orphan it was of paramount importance. It was a relief to me when, after a few embarrassed, stammering words, which, though he listened to them attentively, cast no light on the subject, our conversation ended.

There was dancing till late at night in the large mansion among the woods. My pleasantest partner was a young soldier lately returned from India, the eldest son of the Roman Catholic family, whose ancestress had held the ancient castle against the parliamentary army. Her descendant was not unworthy of his ancient name. His pale, dark complexion, flowing hair and melancholy dignity, belonged to a hero of romance. He had distinguished himself and had been severely wounded during the siege of Delhi. At the storming of the Cashmere Gate he had stood his ground against a host of foes. The Catholic soldiers in the army, it was said, adored him.

Clara did not dance. I saw Sir Marmaduke talking to her and trying to raise her spirits, but she looked very sad. As we passed her, on our way to the refreshment-room, my partner whispered a few words to her. I do not know what they were, but that brief sentence called to her lips the only smile I saw on them that evening.

Among other subjects my new acquaintance spoke to me of the chapel and of the contribution towards its restoration presented to him

by the Catholic soldiers in his own regiment, who had saved part of their pay for this purpose. He was an ardent Romanist, and the enthusiasm with which he spoke lit up his features, dispelling their somewhat sombre expression. I saw Sir Marmaduke watching us with anxiety. There were fine pictures in the rooms thrown open for dancing. Most of them were on Scriptural subjects. Again my companion's dark eyes flashed as he pointed out the merits of those masterpieces of art—the holy zeal and deep devotion—the warm fervour or self-sacrificing humility depicted in the saint-like countenances of those first followers of the faith. He might have been a young crusader or a Knight of Malta—religion and valour blended together.

IV.

IT never seemed to occur to Sir Marmaduke that Clara and I, at seventeen, were entitled to consider ourselves young ladies. We were still, according to him, "the children"; if we assumed dignified airs he laughed at us unmercifully. Gradually I accustomed myself to his strange ways, and I ended with liking them. As women we should perhaps have had less liberty. I, at all events, might not have been so happy.

Those were merry days when, as yet untrammelled by conventional regulations, I rode or drove with him over the wild commons, alternating with woodland and yet more picturesque bits of what had once been an extensive chase, where herds of deer ranged at will. Now, most part of the land had been enclosed, but here and there it lay in gorsy swells and breezy uplands, undisturbed by the plough and harrow; with bees humming over the beds of thyme and heather; harebells nodding and thickets of hawthorn and dog-roses standing out upon the short green turf, or tall forest-trees, making a shelter under which the deer in former days trooped in the sultry noon.

Sir Marmaduke knew every corner of these wild glades, every tradition of the chase, and I was girl enough to love a story for its own sake, even if he had not told it half so well. As it was, after a gallop over down and common, we often loitered along the green droves and by thorny hedge-rows as he told tales of the bold outlaws who had set the forest laws at defiance and led a merry life, as we did that bright summer under the greenwood tree.

Sometimes Clara went with us, often large parties met in some shady nook of the chase, at others we rode about alone. Sir Marmaduke called me a child, and in that house whatever he said became rule and law—I was a child at Ashfurlong.

I believe that he liked to fancy us younger than we were that he might subdue us completely. He was stern enough sometimes. I had seen a dark stormy look in his face once or twice at home, and when



"I HAD SEEN A DARK STORMY LOOK ON HIS FACE ONCE OR TWICE WHEN HE QUESTIONED ME UNDER THE CEDAR-TREES AT LORIMERS."

he questioned me under the cedar-trees at Lorimers. But when his horse's hoofs were on the short turf of the chase or on the downs of his native county, he was a boy—first in activity, fleet and buoyant, light and sure of hand. As his beautiful spirited steeds curvetted and bounded, straining against the firmly-held rein when they felt the springy grass and heather under their tread, so did their master's spirit rise and cast off the curb of habit and conventionality when the breeze met us on the heights. How it came surging over the barrows till we bent before it, but Sir Marmaduke sat firm and erect in the saddle, not heeding its boisterous play, now pointing out to me—the stranger—the faint distant undulations, miles and miles away to the westward, which he told me were the Welsh hills, or, southward, a blue streak on the horizon where the sky met the waves of the Channel.

Once—not oftener—Captain Lorimer joined us. I never saw such a change as passed over Sir Marmaduke, who was in the wildest spirits, when the young officer rode up and drew in his rein by my side. I was longing to hear the end of a story to which Clara and I had been listening, but it would have been rude to go on with it before a stranger.

I was inexpressibly wearied by the company of the military hero, but there seemed to be no escape from it. Sir Marmaduke did not speak to me; he rode on in front with Clara, who, I could see, was longing to fall back and join us. I touched my horse with the whip suggestively to my supposed admirer that we should join them. He complied, nothing loth to accede to the proposal.

I do not know how it happened, but half an hour afterwards Sir Marmaduke was finishing the story of the outlaw's daughter to me. Clara had not our taste for legends; she was riding slowly after us with Captain Lorimer. The budding boughs as often hid them completely from us, but Sir Marmaduke did not appear uneasy.

At a turn in the green lane the young Captain lifted his cap and separated from our party. Clara still loitered behind. She did not come up with us when we waited for her, or if we rode back she lagged again, and we could not prevent our horses outstepping hers. When we reached Ashfurlong, and she raised her veil, I was startled by her paleness, but she made me a sign not to take any notice. There was something which I could not fathom in the troubled expression of her countenance as she went quickly past me into her own room, closing the door of communication. I felt that she wished to be alone, and did not disturb her. Besides this, we were never at home till the last moment, and Sir Marmaduke did not like his little girls to be unpunctual. Neither should I have wished his quick eyes to note a hair astray, or any carelessness in our girlish attire. When I was dressed I knocked at Clara's door, but it was fastened. She was in the drawing-room, nevertheless, when the gong sounded, with her fair hair turned back from her pale face, looking just like some of the old family pictures in the gallery at Lorimers.

V.

THERE was a large party staying in the house. Our breakfast-table at Ashfurlong was a hurried one. Sir Marmaduke, though he always professed to be overwhelmed with business, invariably made himself particularly pleasant in the morning. It was one sign among many others of a heart at peace with itself and all the world, strong health, unfailing spirits, and even temper.

Clara caught my hand as I left the room. "Come with me, Janet, I must speak to you. Let us go where we are sure not to be disturbed." She drew me with her down a long passage, and, taking a key from a chain which hung round her neck, opened a door which admitted us into a room I had never entered before, though I had now been several weeks at Ashfurlong.

It was a grave, severe-looking apartment, different from any other in that old house. A small narrow chamber, with one high oriel window looking into the park. Very little furniture, only a Prie-Dieu chair, and, on a carved stand of ebony, a crucifix and an hour-glass, a case containing strange melancholy relics, and a pair of ancient, massive candlesticks. Cushions laid down on the floor as if for kneeling, and books bound in velvet and clasped and lettered with gold, rested upon the chiffonier or stand, I almost felt inclined to call it an altar. I looked at the books, and found that one was a Missal the other a breviary—the latter was kept open by a heavy cross from which hung a string of beads.

Clara was quite silent. She had followed me into the room and, while I was making these observations, she knelt for a moment or two, burying her face in her hands, which she rested on the back of the high oaken chair.

"Janet," she said at last, "I am not the first of the Dalzells who has changed her religion, this room was once my poor mother's oratory. It is still sacred to her memory. Nothing has been touched or altered in its arrangements since she died; you must not blame me too severely."

"Indeed, Clara, I am only sorry," I said, while I could not help weeping, it seemed so strange, so sad to hear my own favourite friend confess herself to be an apostate. "Is it too late to argue with you? I am not clever enough to know what to say, but if your mind is unsettled let me speak to Sir Marmaduke, to your aunt, Miss Dalzell. I am sure you have no reason to fear their severity."

"No," she said firmly, "it is too late. I am what my mother was before me. I have been a Roman Catholic for some months. If need be I would die for my religion. It is not of the slightest use for you to argue, Janet, and I am happier than I was before. It is such a comfort to have a spiritual guide in whom I may trust implicitly; to do exactly as I am told; to act by a Heaven-

commissioned director; to be troubled by no wavering doubts; no scruples fostered by my weak erring judgment. For the first time in my life my unquiet spirit is at rest."

"Does this infallible guide tell you to deceive your kind friends, Clara? I do not think I should be at all easy in my mind if I were continually sinning against the truth as you have done lately."

A faint blush stole over Clara's face. She turned her head away.

"What am I to do?" I said. "I hope you do not wish me to keep this dangerous secret. I shall never be able to look Sir Marmaduke in the face again."

"You must not betray me, Janet," said Clara, throwing herself suddenly into my arms. "Never mind controversy; all the arguments in the world would be thrown away. Every feeling of my heart, every tendency of my nature has its bias that way. I have no misgivings concerning the past. It is the future that troubles me. You cannot turn my feet back from the path which I believe to be the right one. But, Janet, I want an arm to lean upon, one true friend to stand by me. Must I seek her elsewhere?"

Clara looked earnestly in my face. Her eyes were swimming in tears. I thought that she wished me to break the news of her secession from the Church of England to her relations; and, though I hated the task, I promised to aid her.

"Yesterday," she said, sitting down on the ground while she made me place myself in the window-seat near her, "a great change was operated in my destiny. One of the principal agents in my conversion was Captain Lorimer. Ever since I can remember he has exercised an influence over me. When he returned from India, desperately wounded, it was his intention if he recovered to retire from the world. Had he, as he then proposed, entered a cloister, I should have done the same. But latterly"—she blushed deeply and hesitated—"he has changed his purpose: the interests of the church, of his family, required that he should marry. It is of no use to ask Sir Marmaduke's consent; but he is so kind, he will forgive us. Janet, you must be my bridesmaid to-morrow."

She wound her arms beseechingly round me; at that moment her name was called. Clara sprang up and darted from the room. I still remained, sad, solitary, full of trouble and sorrow at the window.

I do not know how many minutes had elapsed before I saw my kind host riding at a leisurely pace along the road through the park. He was at some distance from me. I did not think that he could see me, and, as I looked at him, the tears which had gathered under my eyelids stole down my cheeks. Just as I was wiping them away he caught sight of me, and, in an instant, setting spurs to his horse, he leapt the ha-ha and came straight across the turf to the window.

"What are you doing in that room, little girl? Do you not know that you are in Blue-Beard's chamber? Who gave you the key?"

I was so frightened that I could not speak. He saw that I had been weeping.

"Janet!—Miss Ogilvie—forgive me if I have said a word that could vex you. For Heaven's sake stop crying! I shall ride straight in through the window if you shed another tear. Who has dared to annoy you? Are you alone? What is that book?"

He lifted himself up in the stirrups, and passing his hand through the window, took from the ledge one of the illuminated volumes which I had looked at on first entering the room. A hurried, indignant exclamation escaped him.

"Let this rubbish moulder on the shelf. Leave these infernal mummeries which bring misery and unrest to our homes. My dear good girl, what can I say or do to turn your thoughts from these matters? I would not have had this happen for worlds. Go and put on your habit. Let us take a ride over the downs, and, though I am no great theologian, I will try and clear away these cobwebs from your brain."

I obeyed him, too glad to do anything that would give him pleasure, but, during our whole ride, Sir Marmaduke, though he conversed more gravely than usual, did not revert to the subject of my studies. Not until we came under the shade of the ash-trees in the avenue; then he said, gravely:

"Do not go into that room, or read Mrs. Dalzell's books. May I trust you? I do not think that they have done you much harm as yet."

I promised that I would not, and he seemed quite satisfied. Clara was in her own room when I entered mine. She gave one quick, anxious look in my face, then she said:

"Janet, I am not afraid of you. I am certain that, if you do not aid, you will not betray me."

There was no time for more. We were late as usual, and though we made the greatest possible haste, the gong sounded that day before we had finished dressing.

VI.

CLARA DALZELL wept when I told her that night my resolution. I was determined not to take any part in deceiving her relations. I must, if she persisted in her intentions, acquaint Sir Marmaduke with the fact that she meant to steal from his house clandestinely and marry a person with whom it was very evident that her family did not wish her to be connected. I was too indignant to be reasonable. My feelings were all roused. I could not bear to think how completely she had disappointed all our expectations.

I daresay I spoke very wildly. Clara's tears dried up. She looked half frightened, then angry, at last coldly reserved. "Say no more, Janet.

"I see, I know that I have acted wrongly; but Captain Lorimer is worthy of any woman's regard. His family connections and position in the world are quite equal to my own. The principal bar to our union is removed, now that I am like himself, a Catholic. My own mother would have sanctioned our alliance. Perhaps, however, you are right about this hasty marriage. I shall see Philip to-morrow morning and will tell him that it must not take place at present. When my uncle knows that I am of the same faith with my lover he may not oppose our mutual wish. Good-night."

She kissed me on the forehead and went at once to her room. I was sorry to have grieved her, yet, on the whole, I fancied that what had passed was for the best. At all events I was released from the cruel necessity of revealing her secret. She had undertaken to think the matter over calmly, and I felt convinced that reason and principle would resume their influence over her.

VII.

LATE in the afternoon of the next day I met Sir Marmaduke as I was passing through the hall.

"Are you inclined for a drive?" he said. "The carriage is at the door and no one else is ready. Clara has a headache. I want to show you the prettiest view in the county. Here is your cloak—you may want it, the evenings are closing in earlier. Now then, what are you waiting for? Oh, they all know you are going with me, no need for leave-takings." He handed me into the large park-phaeton, which stood at the door, took the reins in his own hand, and placed himself beside me, and we dashed off at the usual rapid pace of his horses.

The drive was a new one to me—not over the chase, but northward past villages, and up and down steep hills with woods at their base. I had seen many finer prospects, and rather wondered what the particular one might be which was the object of our drive. On and on we went winding along narrow lanes, which twisted and turned about among the hills till I was completely bewildered. We should get back to Ashfurlong presently, my companion observed, he was taking me home another way.

Though Sir Marmaduke was unusually silent I enjoyed myself excessively. The quick even pace of the beautiful horses, as they dashed along the shady roads in the cool evening, the soft breeze, the light of stars which began to twinkle in the dusk, the soft tones of the clocks in the church steeples as they told the hour—first six, then seven—all was pleasant and harmonious. There was no need to speak.

One large planet glimmered just in front of us. Either Venus or Jupiter, whichever at that time happened to be the coming star. I asked Sir Marmaduke, but he scarcely seemed to hear me. For the

first time I noticed that his voice and manner were changed and sombre. He lashed the horses, which was very unusual, and the hill we were ascending was a steep one. I did not recollect anything like it near Ashfurlong, and by this time I knew that part of the country well. To the left, on another hill and in the hollow, I saw the lights of a large town. I began to be a little frightened.

"Where are we?" I exclaimed. "We have certainly lost our way. There is nothing like that great hill and those clustered houses, and churches near Ashfurlong."

Sir Marmaduke did not reply. We had reached the top of the ascent. The horses dashed down the incline—a sharp turn to the left and their hoofs were clattering on the pavement—we were driving through streets in which lamps were beginning to be lit. Finally the carriage stopped at the door of a large hotel. The waiters came out with lights in their hands to receive us. Sir Marmaduke threw the reins to his groom and got down, handing me out respectfully afterwards. I felt as if I were in a dream, but his manner was so commanding that I obeyed him. I heard him give some rapid directions, and we were shown to a sitting-room, in which, as the evenings were growing chilly, a fire had been kindled by his orders, and candles were burning.

I dared not speak. I supposed that he would explain himself satisfactorily when we were left alone, but he walked up and down the long room, saying not a word for some moments after the waiter left us.

At last he came close up to me. "Janet," he said hoarsely, "there was no other way of saving you. Some day or other—not now—you will thank me for giving you time for reflection."

It was the last thing towards which I felt inclined at that moment. My ideas were in confusion.

"I am responsible," he said sternly, "to your friends for your well-being while you are with me. What do you know about this young fellow that should lead you to run such a fearful risk for his sake. If you choose to marry him a year hence, or when you are of age, you will, of course, please yourself; but you shall not do it at seventeen, without the consent of your parents. Why, you are almost—not quite—a child; you have no business to think of such nonsense. I have a great mind to take you straight back to school!"

I was so angry, so perplexed, that the tears rose to my eyes. He took my hand kindly. "Do not cry, Janet—perhaps I have acted injudiciously. I begin to think it is so, but no other way presented itself to me. Clara knows that you are with me, and will explain everything to Miss Dalzell. No one else shall ever hear of the imprudent step you had in contemplation. You know I am old enough to be your uncle. You are not afraid to trust yourself with me for a few hours. To-morrow you will be at home—with your parents in Worcestershire. Then, if such be your wish, if you are still angry with me, I will never see you more."

I do not know what made me so silly, but at this threat the tears I had hitherto restrained burst forth. I could not speak.

"Before we part," he said seriously, "I must tell you one thing. Perhaps it is an excuse for—perhaps an aggravation of the offence I have committed. Though I know that you will only laugh at me—though you fancy yourself plighted to another—I love you. I would have given the world, if it had been mine, to make my merry little play-fellow my wife. Nay, more. Should you wake from this delusion, if you ever see that young puppy in his true colours, remember that I shall be just as fond of you as I am at this moment." He paused and took my hand.

There was something so irresistibly ludicrous in the mistake he had made, in our position altogether, that I could not help laughing. Sir Marmaduke looked at me with amazement, but as his eyes met mine, the angry flash melted away. We were both silent.

"Janet," he said at last, "no one but Clara, your former school-fellow, knows of my having withdrawn you from this danger. Nay, it is no laughing matter, you foolish girl—or is it my pretensions at which you smile? Read that; there is no time to lose; the night coach starts to meet the train at —— in half an hour. Mind that you are ready; I am going to take our places."

Clara's note, which Sir Marmaduke gave into my hand sealed, ran as follows.

"Dearest Janet, forgive me for having unintentionally deceived you, but Philip will not give me back my promise. When you read this I shall no longer be Clara Dalzell. Sir Marmaduke has fallen into a strange mistake and is going to take you away in order to prevent that event occurring which his absence will facilitate. This error will be soon set right, and, after all, you are only helping me against your will instead of voluntarily, as I trusted my school friend, for the sake of auld lang syne, would have done. I hope you will not be very much frightened, and that Sir Marmaduke will not tease you too much by his impatience. If I were not crying so bitterly I should laugh. Your own, CLARA."

Sir Marmaduke was only absent from the room for a few moments. I thought that the best explanation I could give was to let him read Clara's note. He did so twice over.

I went to the window. The evening star which had lighted us was shining down into the garden at the back of the hotel. At a distance the noises in the street were heard, but the greensward, trees and flowers on which I looked were all quiet and peaceful. Not a soul was to be seen.

A manly step crossed the room and stopped just behind me.

"After all, then, Lorimer is not so much worse than I am," Sir Marmaduke said, bending over me. "He has won a bride by

stealth, and I have carried off mine. Shall it be so decided, Janet ? ”

I do not know what I answered. “Please, sir, the coach is waiting ”——roused us from an attempt to settle whether it was Venus that looked down upon us from the summer heaven. Clara’s forgiveness was obtained as we journeyed to my own home, for I would not return to Ashfurlong. Nevertheless, I did revisit the place before the year ended, and I am spending a longer and yet brighter holiday than the last under the roof of the Dalzells, with Clara Lorimer for my nearest country neighbour.

A SONG IN JUNE.

WHAT were the world without you ?—

A sky without a star.
Such lights are shed about you
As on June evenings are,
When on the tranquil country’s breast
The drowsy daylight sinks to rest,
And in the dim and dewy brake,
The nightingales awake.

What were my heart without you ?—

Summer without a rose.
Such perfume clings about you
As the still garden knows,
When lilies on the heart of June
Lie breathless in the burning noon,
And in the silence dazzling-deep,
The crimson roses sleep.

What were my life without you ?—

A night without a moon.
Such peace is wound about you
As clothes the nights of June,
When jasmine flowers, the moon’s delight,
Are gathered in the lap of night,
And yield their souls to moon and dew—
As I yield mine to you.

E. NESBIT.

LADY CECILIA'S EMERALDS.

CHAPTER VI.

"DON'T waste another thought upon him, Phœbe! He really isn't worth it, my dear."

The girl's cold hand lay in the warm, kindly clasp of her friend, as the two sat side by side on a settee in the drawing-room that same afternoon. A few tears from time to time fell slowly from Phœbe's eyes, but except for that, she had listened to the account of the morning's interview with apparent composure.

"Tell me the truth, Phœbe, do you really love the creature?"

Phœbe met her companion's inquiring look with a steady eye.

"No, Lady Cecilia, I do not. I have been very near to loving a creation of my own imagination, who took the outward form of Leighton Lee, but now that I know Mr. Lee for what he really is, I shall soon dismiss the other fictitious personage to the limbo of unrealised ideals."

"Yet you weep over your lost ideal!"

The girl smiled scornfully. "'Some natural tears she shed!' You must really pardon me that little tribute to my woman's weakness, Lady Cecilia, in consideration of my sparing you the 'attaque de nerfs' which a French heroine similarly circumstanced would think it only decent to inflict upon you."

As she spoke she dashed the still-falling tears proudly away.

"Don't try to be *too* brave, child. You must and *do* feel this desertion?"

"Of course I feel it! It is one more proof—and a sternly convincing one—of the difficulty which I shall have in living down this dreadful suspicion. But I shall not let it break my heart, Lady Cecilia!"

"Yet, after all, the man is handsome, and fairspoken, and a general favourite. How is it he has not succeeded in touching your heart more nearly?"

"I scarcely know. But I see plainly now that though I was flattered by his preference, and grateful for his kindness, it was never the real man Leighton Lee that attracted me."

"Then what was it?"

"It must have been—I think it was——"

She stopped abruptly, and looked wildly around her.

"Oh, what is it? It is all dark, and everything is going away from me! Ah!——" With a shuddering cry Phœbe slipped suddenly to the floor. For the first time for years she had fainted,

They carried her upstairs, and laid her on the bed in her own daintily-furnished little room. Before long the heavy swoon passed away ; but consciousness did not return with the reviving heart-beats. The girl's nervous system, already strained by anxiety, had suddenly collapsed under the added humiliation of her suitor's withdrawal. Stoutly though she had borne herself under the ordeal, the blow had struck home.

When, in answer to her urgent summons of medical aid, Dr. North appeared in the place of his older and more familiar colleague, Lady Cecilia scarcely knew whether she were pleased or annoyed. She had certainly heard high praise of the new-comer's ability, and good Mr. Barnes, old friend though he was, in some things was undeniably a little behind the age. On the other hand, Dr. North was young, and a stranger to her.

Fortunately for all parties the new doctor's personal appearance was greatly in his favour. A well-favoured woman herself, Lady Cecilia was a great admirer of physical beauty. Dr. North was perhaps thirty years of age, of medium height and slightly-built, his broad chest and upright carriage conveyed an immediate impression of exceptional health and vigour. The well-carried head, with its abundant crop of curly chestnut hair, the clear complexion, the bright blue eyes, which at times looked as though an actual light were shining behind and through them, the firm, well-cut mouth shaded by the short moustache, the shapely hand with its capable, round-tipped fingers, all combined to make a whole which seldom failed to inspire respect and confidence. After ten minutes' talk with the new doctor, Lady Cecilia felt happy in the conviction that all would be done for her favourite which skill and care could accomplish.

* * * * *

Yet day after day dragged wearily by in the sick-room, and one sleepless night followed another in apparently interminable succession. In addition to the nervous exhaustion, it proved that Phoebe, in her long wet drive to Corby on the day of her seizure, had experienced a severe chill. Fever set in, accompanied by delirium, terribly exhausting, and painful to watch.

Dr. North felt that more resolute measures were called for.

"You have never yet told me," he said to Lady Cecilia one morning, about a week after his first visit, "the precise nature of the shock which preceded Miss Marsdale's seizure."

"You have no doubt, however, heard rumours about it in the neighbourhood, Dr. North?"

"Perhaps so. But it would be more satisfactory to have the facts at first hand from you. There is no time to be lost now, if my patient's health is not to be permanently sacrificed. If this weight is not soon removed from her mind, we shall have her sinking under it."

"Do you think her reason endangered?" Lady Cecilia put the question with difficulty.

"Most certainly I do. This obstinate delirium, which refuses to yield to the strongest narcotics I dare employ, is most alarming. Sleep she must have, and that soon, or either mind or body will give way under the strain."

He listened with the keenest attention to the details of the story as related by Lady Cecilia.

"But all this happened last August," he remarked, when she had ended. "There must have been some more recent cause to account for the sudden collapse of last week?"

"Miss Marsdale had the additional pain of learning that a man who had professed strong regard for her, wished to withdraw his suit on account of this affair."

"What a cowardly cur he must be!"

"Thank you heartily for the word, Dr. North! It is so exactly what I have longed to call him myself! If he honestly believed her guilty, it would be another matter altogether; but to profess belief in her innocence, and then abandon her for fear of a few wagging tongues—that passes the limits of Christian charity!"

As he looked at Lady Cecilia's clearly-cut countenance, now all aglow with honest indignation, Dr. North thought to himself that a finer type of the English gentlewoman it would not be easy to find. Her figure was tall and erect; her hair snow-white, but so abundant and wavy that it seemed almost like a halo of glory round the well-shaped head; her eyes were of so dark a brown that but for their greater softness of expression they might easily have been mistaken for black.

Lady Cecilia's own sitting-room, in which the two were then seated, bore in a marked degree the impress of its owner's character. Luxury and fashion alike were conspicuous by their absence; no silken hangings adorned the walls, no rose-coloured curtains softened the pitiless daylight; no thousand and one trifles from every quarter of the globe hinted at cosmopolitan wanderings. Yet the room was both habitable and cheerful, wanting neither in beauty nor comfort. A few choice water-colours carefully hung, an Indian carpet pleasantly soft to the tread and delightful to the eye in its subdued but glowing colours, a well-furnished writing-table with a wealth of convenient drawers and pigeon-holes, half-a-dozen really comfortable chairs, a small Broadwood pianoforte, and a book-case where long-tried and honoured friends gleamed resplendent in purple vellum, and creamy calf, and crimson morocco. Such was the plenishing of Lady Cecilia Merton's sanctum, and in it she looked like a fine cameo in an appropriate setting.

"Miss Marsdale's case interests me greatly," said Dr. North thoughtfully. "I cannot believe that you, who know her so intimately, can be mistaken as to her innocence."

"She would have cut off her right hand rather than defraud *anybody*—to say nothing of her personal affection for me."

"Your testimony agrees well with my previous conception of Miss Marsdale's character. I was much struck by her common-sense and general capability during our fever-troubles in the village last summer. She is evidently a 'born nurse,' and the born nurse is rarely, if ever, a bad woman."

"My poor little Phoebe!" Lady Cecilia almost laughed. The doctor smiled in reply, and his smile was a very bright and winning one.

"She would be an exceedingly bad one if she had betrayed such confidence as yours! But as we are quite agreed that she has *not* done so, it only remains for us to set her mind at ease by convincing other people who are gifted with less discrimination. I feel sure you have made every possible effort to unravel the mystery."

"Mr. Weston, the well-known detective, has done all that can be done, without a publicity which for Phoebe's sake I absolutely forbade—much to my brother's displeasure."

"Of course, you have considered the obvious possibility of Miss Marsdale's having secreted the necklet herself in a fit of somnambulism?"

"Mr. Weston suggested that idea on his first visit, but we can find no evidence that she has ever in her life walked in her sleep."

"It does not follow that she never has done so, under exceptional circumstances. Lady Cecilia, will you trust me to try an experiment, which in France would be made without hesitation in such a case?"

"I must know more before answering you, Dr. North."

"Perhaps you may have chanced to hear that I have lately returned from a course of study in the great French schools of medicine. Among other places, I went to Nancy, and spent six months in the famous cliniques of Liébeault and Bernheim. There I saw almost every form of mental and nervous disease treated by what—not too severely to shock our susceptible English orthodoxy—we will call simply 'mental suggestion.' 'Suggestive therapeutics' makes a very well-sounding title, does it not?"

Lady Cecilia's wide reading kept her well abreast of current thought.

"You are speaking of hypnotism," she said quickly.

"Exactly so—if you are not afraid of the word! English medical prejudice is so strongly set against everything which can possibly be classed as 'occult,' that a beginner like myself would scarcely dare to introduce so startling a novelty into ordinary practice, except under the strongest possible provocation. But in Miss Marsdale's case, I have counted the cost, and with your consent, I am prepared to try the experiment."

Lady Cecilia looked doubtful and a little startled.

"Is it not attended with very serious risk?" she asked presently.

"There are men of unquestioned veracity who say they have employed it constantly for thirty years without a single mischance. Who can say as much for chloroform?"

"But are you sure that, even if I give my consent, you *can* influence Miss Marsdale?"

"That is a more valid objection. No, Lady Cecilia; I am by no means sure. Only actual experiment can settle that question. Still, I feel very hopeful on the point. After a fair amount of experience, such as I gained at Nancy, one acquires a certain intuition in the choice of suitable subjects which rarely misleads you."

"And should you succeed in influencing her, what good results do you hope to attain?"

"I have a double end in view. First, I want to give her sleep. And there I am met by the serious obstacle of the delirium,—a factor which enormously diminishes the chance of success. Still, I do not despair. With patience and perseverance most difficulties can be overcome in the end."

"And what then?" Hope and anxiety were striving for the mastery in Lady Cecilia's expressive countenance.

"Then comes, first, repose for the overwrought brain. If possible, I should keep my patient asleep almost continuously for many days."

"If you could accomplish only that, we should indeed owe you a heavy debt of gratitude! To see her have but one hour's good quiet sleep, free from that weary monotonous moaning, and that restless to and fro, I would lie awake myself for a month!"

"I trust you will see her enjoy many such hours if, as I hope, I may consider my request granted?"

"You will take the entire responsibility upon yourself, Dr. North?"

"Every atom of it. I have tried not to alarm you too soon, Lady Cecilia, but I must say plainly now that Miss Marsdale's case is so serious that I can scarcely make things worse, even if I fail to do good."

Lady Cecilia was much moved. Phoebe had become especially dear to her of late, and as she thought of the shadow lying over the bright young life she had tried to serve, her eyes filled with sudden tears.

"Do as you think best," she said with decision. "I will share all responsibility with you."

"Thank you. You are very good."

The young man held out his hand with an involuntary gesture of comradeship; and the lady's firm white hand met his in a sympathetic grasp. The two large, honest natures understood one another as by instinct, and from that day forward, in spite of the barriers of rank and age, Lady Cecilia Merton and Lionel North were firm friends.

"When do you wish to try your experiment, Dr. North?"

"With your permission, this afternoon. I shall return home now, and make arrangements for an absence of twenty-four hours."

"So long as that! Why?"

"My task will be, I have no doubt, a long and a difficult one. I may have to make repeated attempts before the smallest degree of success is attained. But I shall renew the attempt at short intervals

till I *do* succeed. And then—— But that is far enough for the present, Lady Cecilia! Good-bye till this afternoon."

"Oh, by the way," he ran back to add, "will you try to explain something of the coming incantations to your faithful maid? We may be glad of her assistance—on yours, you see, I reckon without requesting it."

CHAPTER VII.

THE brief November afternoon was fast drawing to a close. In the sick-room an anxious little company had gathered around the small white-draped bed, on which, wan and wasted, her fair hair cut close to her head, her eyes bright with the brilliance of fever, Phoebe Marsdale was lying. On one side sat Lady Cecilia, grave and anxiously watchful; by the foot stood Thorpe, a little frightened, somewhat suspicious, and wholly incredulous, yet entirely obedient and helpful. On the sick girl's right, facing her, sat the young doctor, a shade paler than usual perhaps, but the very incarnation of relentless perseverance and resistless patience.

For some considerable time, a little gentle force had been needed to stop the patient's restless tossing to and fro; but at length, wearied out by the steady resistance which met her every attempt at movement, Phoebe had succumbed to the inevitable, and now, except for a weary rolling of the head, she lay motionless, propped up by a pile of pillows.

"That is the first step gained," said the experimenter, with a sigh of satisfaction. "Now, if I can once make her look at me, I believe the battle will be won."

But this was a work of time and difficulty, for the burning eyes moved with extraordinary rapidity from spot to spot, and all effort to attract their gaze for a long time seemed hopeless. Nothing but genuine scientific zeal and warm personal interest could have sustained the young doctor in his prolonged and wearisome efforts. But he had his reward: at last there came a moment when the hot dry eyes were suddenly arrested by the steady gaze so firmly fixed upon them, and, once arrested, her glance was not again diverted. As she looked, little by little the moans died away into silence, and the weary head ceased its restless motion. To the anxious spectators it seemed that the fascinated gaze had lasted an hour, but in reality not a quarter of that time had elapsed when slowly, feebly, flutteringly, the weary eyelids fell, and breathing softly as an infant, Phoebe lay at rest before them.

Dr. North straightened his aching back with a long breath of relief. One of his patient's thin hands he still held in a firm clasp; his other hand he laid lightly on her burning forehead. Silence reigned in the darkening room; the onlookers scarcely dared to breathe, as they watched the gradual deepening of the magnetic sleep.

An hour later, Lionel North gently disengaged his hand, and with

a silent gesture summoned Lady Cecilia from the room, motioning Thorpe to take his place by the bedside.

"We may safely leave her awhile to your maid now, I think," he said, as he accepted a well-earned cup of tea in an adjoining room. "She will probably sleep like that till I arouse her, but if you will allow me, I shall remain here for the night. She may grow restless again by-and-by, and need my presence to calm her. When I awake her in the morning, I have every hope we shall find her reason restored."

* * * * *

The result fully justified this hope. When, after a blissfully quiet night, Phoebe, at Dr. North's suggestion, partially awoke next morning, the light of reason once more shone in her pretty brown eyes. But before she could utter a word, a cup was held to her lips.

"You will drink this," said a voice which seemed to carry with it irresistible authority, and she obeyed at once.

"Now you will close your eyes, and sleep again," went on the same authoritative voice, and with a child-like feeling of obedience she at once sank back into the healing slumber.

For nearly a week Phoebe thus lived what her "externalised conscience," as the doctor styled himself, called "the life of a dormouse." By the end of that time, all dangerous symptoms had taken their departure, and almost from hour to hour, the patient visibly gained in bodily health and mental vigour.

"You have saved her—saved her from worse than death!" exclaimed Lady Cecilia warmly one day, as she led the way to her own room after the visit to the sick-room. "We can never be too grateful to you, Dr. North!"

"You have to thank your own clear-headed courage also, Lady Cecilia," answered the young man with becoming modesty. "Had you been too prejudiced or too timid to permit my experiment, I should have been powerless to render any efficient assistance."

"But now, tell me truly," said his companion a little anxiously, "have you really gained such power over Phoebe that you could compel her to do whatever you pleased?"

The doctor smiled reassuringly at her.

"No, Lady Cecilia! That is the unproved assertion of fiction and prejudice, held true nowadays by only a small minority of real investigators. This much power I have gained: if, when fully restored to health, Miss Marsdale permits me to experiment further, I shall probably be able to entrance her with little difficulty. And, in that trance, she would most likely accept from me any suggestion which did not conflict with her sense of right or even of *les bien sances*. Fortunately for the future of 'suggestive therapeutics,' the moral sense is the last and best fortified stronghold of the personality."

"That is good hearing. I don't like to imagine any human being at the mercy of another's will, however benevolent that will might be."

"Set your mind at rest on that point, Lady Cecilia. Miss Marsdale, I promise you, shall be left in full possession of her individuality! But we must not forget that our proposed task is as yet only half accomplished. Thus far I have been able by suitable suggestion to keep my patient's mind from recurring to her troubles; but when once she gets about again, it will be impossible to prevent her recalling them—for I dare not tamper permanently with her memory."

"What do you propose to do, Dr. North? You have done so much already that we confidently look to you for further help."

"Thank you. Well, as soon as Miss Marsdale's health is fully restored, I propose making an attempt to bring her into the condition of active somnambulism. If I succeed in doing this, we shall at any rate be able to ascertain, I hope, whether in any previous abnormal condition, she herself has hidden the jewels."

"That certainly seems the most feasible explanation; though we have searched the house so thoroughly, it is difficult to imagine where she could have put them."

"Well, time only can show; for we shall have to wait awhile before it will be wise to experiment further. If we fail to find the clue on that road, Lady Cecilia, we must cast about for a fresh scent—that's all! Good-bye."

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTMAS was fast drawing near. A light sprinkling of powdery snow lay sparkling on the ground, as Dr. North's light dog-cart rolled up the drive to the Dower House early one bright morning. The doctor's mouth was a trifle more firmly compressed than usual, and his eyes were steadily fixed on his horse's head; his look altogether was that of a man resolved to "do or die." Lady Cecilia met him in the porch.

"We did not hope to see you to-day, doctor," she said cheerily, as she shook hands with her favourite.

"No, Lady Cecilia. And I have only come now to beg a great favour. May I come in for a minute?"

They went into Lady Cecilia's own room, but the doctor declined the proffered seat.

"No, thank you! I want you to let me take Miss Marsdale for a little drive this bright morning," he said abruptly, yet with a deliberate meaning in his tone which made his hearer glance sharply at him. He met her look of inquiry with a frank smile and a little assenting nod.

"Yes, Lady Cecilia, that is exactly what I mean! What a blessing it is to have to do with people gifted with quick comprehension! I want to send my man home again—on a most important errand—and then to carry off my late patient for a little drive," he added, demurely, but with a mischievous sparkle in his eyes.

"And I am to conclude that the drive is preparatory to a most extended journey later on?"

Lady Cecilia smiled back at him with sincere sympathy as she spoke.

"If I can succeed in persuading my companion to accompany me further I shall be a very happy man."

The doctor's voice was gay, but his steady blue eyes spoke eloquently of the deep feeling which underlay his light words. Lady Cecilia's thoughts involuntarily recurred to the last suitor whom she had interviewed in that room, and the doctor's cause did not lose by the comparison.

"Phoebe will never accept you, as long as this cloud hangs over her," she said, after a few minutes' thought.

"I suppose not; I know how absurdly sensitive you say she is on that subject. But that is no reason that I should not take the most convincing means in my power to assure her of my absolute confidence and respect."

"You mean that, though you have not given up the hope of clearing her name, you wish to ask her for your wife *first*?"

"You understand me perfectly, Lady Cecilia! The horse is getting impatient, I am afraid."

Dr. North laughed a little shyly as he glanced out of the window at his waiting steed. Lady Cecilia laughed too as she accepted the hint.

"And someone else is getting impatient too, I suppose! Well, I will go and endeavour to persuade Phoebe that your prescription of a morning drive is an essential part of the treatment."

Ten minutes afterwards, Phoebe entered the room, alone, and with a slightly-puzzled expression, which showed that no hint of the visitor's ulterior purpose had reached her. It needed all the doctor's self-possession to disguise the admiration which awoke within him at the first sight of the dainty figure. Phoebe was enveloped in a long close-fitting cloak of dark green cloth trimmed with sable, a costly garment which Lady Cecilia had commanded from town, as an outward and visible expression of her joy at the girl's recent recovery. A little toque of dark green velvet, with just a suggestion of sable nestling among its folds, set off to great advantage her delicate features, and fair complexion, and the short curls peeping from below the velvet, harmonised admirably with the rich hue of the fur. Yet the doctor met her with an admirably-feigned serenity, carefully assumed in order to banish any latent suspicion which might even now rob him of his opportunity.

"Good-morning, Miss Marsdale, glad to see you looking so well again. Lady Cecilia thought you might perhaps not dislike a little drive this fine morning. It is so bright and sunny just now, that I will take upon myself the responsibility of your venturing in an open carriage."

"I should like it very much, Dr. North," said Phœbe with frank pleasure. "How far are you going?"

"Oh, just as far as you feel inclined to go. I have a leisure morning,—for a wonder!—and as you no longer need my services as physician, I ventured to hope you might not disdain them in the humbler capacity of coachman."

A brighter colour tinged his hearer's face. She had expected to accompany the doctor on his professional visit to some outlying cottage or farm-house; that he should have come purposely to drive her out was a new and startling idea. However, she had gone too far to retreat; the thought only added a shade of gentle restraint to her manner as she took her place beside the driver.

It was another shock to her nerves when the doctor arrested his groom in the act of mounting to the back seat.

"I want you to go back home, Joyce, and take some—some ointment to Mrs. Frost at Mill End. Ask for it at the surgery—the usual thing, you can say."

The groom stood motionless for a full minute gazing after the fast-retreating vehicle. Then he relieved his mind by quite a series of rapid winks as he started on his homeward way.

"*That* don't take as much seein' through as a brick wall!" he remarked to himself as he walked meditatively down the drive. "Ointment to Mrs. Frost, indeed! And her been about and well this six weeks and more!"

Meanwhile the dog-cart sped merrily on over the firm dry roads. The doctor's horse was young and spirited enough to give zest to the pleasure of driving him, but too well-broken to claim the whole of his driver's attention. There was no wind, no dust, no damp; no drawback whatever to mar the enjoyment of the rapid motion and brilliant sunshine.

Phœbe was allowed ample time to grow accustomed to her novel position, and also to get the full benefit of the fresh morning air, before her composure was ruffled by any word beyond the cheerful common-places of everyday chat. Doctor and patient had grown to know each other well during the long illness, and topics of mutual interest were not hard to find. Books, music, passing events, village gossip, all by turns afforded opportunity for that easy interchange of ideas which makes conversation a real pleasure. Lionel North felt that he would be well content to drive on thus for ever; but if the lover had no conscience, the doctor retained his senses, and when they came to a cross-road some eight or nine miles from Merton, he resolutely turned his horse's head homewards. As he did so, his anecdotes of life at a German university came to a sudden pause.

Phœbe looked inquiringly at him, surprised at the sudden silence. What she saw in the strong face beside her it might be hard to define, but it sufficed to check the question on her lips.

"What would you think of a man, Miss Marsdale, who brought you all these miles just to ask you a single question?"

"It would depend very much on the question—and the man," answered Phoebe in a very subdued voice.

"It is a very simple question, and the man has at least the merit of being very much in earnest. It is just this: do you care for me enough to give me a hope that you will some day be my wife?"

"I care for you far too much for that." The clear, honest eyes were bravely lifted to his as Phoebe spoke, but they speedily sank again before the look of love they encountered. "Don't—don't misunderstand me," she stammered in her confusion. "I didn't mean to say that."

"Nevertheless, you said it, and I shall never forget it."

"I only meant to say that I had too much regard for you to bring disgrace upon you, Dr. North." Her face flamed, then grew suddenly white. "Do you know that you are offering to marry a woman whom many people think a thief? Worse than a thief—a monster of ingratitude and deceit?"

It had needed all Phoebe's strength to bring out the words, and she waited with throbbing pulses for the reply. A light laugh fell like music on her straining ears.

"You must be indeed innocent, Miss Phoebe, if you imagine a poor country doctor can go about his daily work without being plagued with all the gossip and scandal of all the old women, male and female, in the place. Of course I heard all about your troubles long ago!"

"And yet you ask me to marry you?"

"I most deliberately and earnestly place myself and my whole future unreservedly in your hands."

A quick sob broke from the girl's lips. "How good you are to me!" It was all she could say. The doctor waited patiently till she had recovered some degree of composure.

"I don't see any particular goodness," he remarked presently, "in trying to secure for myself the thing I most covet in the world. Phoebe—tell me plainly—do you really care for me? I dare not say *love*, what could you have seen in a mere acquaintance like me to love? But do you care for me just enough to feel pleasure in the knowledge that *I love you* with all my heart and soul? Never mind anything else in the world just now, only give me an honest answer to a plain question."

Phoebe sat for a minute in silence. Then she spoke, firmly and clearly. "If I do answer your question honestly, will you in return promise to abide afterwards by my decision as to the future?"

"Most distinctly—*No!* Who knows what cranks a sensitive girl like you, half worried out of her life, won't take into her head? I shouldn't be in the least surprised if you first told me you—well, had a certain sort of mild regard for me, and then calmly announced your deliberate intention of taking up your abode henceforth in the centre

of the Sahara, forbidding me to follow under penalty of your everlasting displeasure, and claiming my promise to accept these delightful terms!"

The doctor was quite himself again, and Phoebe could but laugh at the energy of his reply. He laughed too.

"Laugh away!" he said cheerily. "You've done far too little of that for some time past. I don't care how much you laugh at me, if only you listen to me."

"How can I help listening when you carry me off in a high dog-cart, and keep that great horse trotting all the time? Do you call that fair play, Dr. North?"

"All's fair in love or war," returned her driver coolly. "Do you know, Phoebe, that you are making me absurdly happy by all this shilly-shallying of yours? You could never be so cruel as to turn round upon me *now* with a brutal 'No,' could you?"

Lionel North tried to speak lightly, for, mingled with the lover's eagerness, was a curious blending of the physician's care; he did not forget the crisis through which his late patient had passed, and he feared to agitate her overmuch. But in spite of himself his voice shook a little as he put the question, and he looked eagerly at the downcast face so near to his own. Phoebe caught the tremor in his tone, and laid aside her weapons of maidenly defence.

"I *do* care for you, more than I can easily tell you," she answered, with simple sincerity. "Your generosity, your faith in me—how could any woman resist them?"

But the doctor interrupted her abruptly.

"That's good as far as it goes, but not good enough, Phoebe! At that rate, if twenty men had all shown the same faith, you would be bound, you see, to love them all! And to be loved in company with nineteen others is not my idea of love. No—you must put aside all thought of that miserable old necklace now, and just ask yourself whether I—plain Lionel North—matter-of-fact, obscure country doctor that I am—with all my thoughts of pride and obstinacy, and a hundred others—whether I am the man of all others whom you would choose as your companion for life? Nothing less than that will satisfy me now! If you don't love me above all the world, say so plainly and let me go. I would not accept a half-and-half love from the best woman God ever made!"

How fast the man's masterfulness grew, when fed with the smallest crumb of hope! Phoebe trembled a little as she realised the force of the passion with which she had to deal.

"You shall have the whole truth," she said, gravely and firmly. "I do love you, Dr. North, love you as you wish to be loved; but I will never be your wife while this shadow rests upon my name."

The young man laughed aloud in his triumphant joy.

"Shadow be hanged! Phoebe, if you love me as you say, I'll make you marry me where and when I please! Why, if mountains

—literal mountains—stood between us, I feel strong enough to dig them down with my single pair of hands, now that I know your whole heart is mine!"

It was a mercy the doctor's horse was so well broken, for the driving for some time past had received but scant attention, and now the right hand only could be spared to hold the reins.

"Don't! oh don't!" protested Phœbe, struggling for release. "What *would* anyone think if they were to see you?"

"Exactly what I intend them to think! That you have found someone who will keep their scandalous tongues in order, if he can't control their ill-regulated thoughts. Phoebe, you may make as many fine resolutions about our marriage as you please; and if it will really make you happier to wait till this affair is cleared up, well and good! I'm willing to wait your pleasure—any time *in reason*"—added the doctor with marked emphasis. "But mark my words, Phoebe! On Christmas Day—and that's just one week from now—you'll walk to church through the village by my side (even if I don't get a chance to go in), and you'll wear my betrothal ring on your finger."

"Was ever a girl taken possession of in such a fashion before?" laughed Phoebe, with tears in her eyes. "Suppose I refuse, sir?"

"You won't," answered her lover composedly. "I know you well, Miss Marsdale; you simply couldn't do it! The bump of self-assertion is entirely wanting on your cranium. Make your mind easy, my dear Phœbe; I shall have my own way henceforth whenever I want it. But as my chief aim in life will be to make you perfectly happy, you won't be at all inconvenienced. You are one of the women who love to be ruled; and as I am a man who loves to rule, we shall live like turtle-doves—theoretical turtle-doves, I mean; in actual life, I believe that turtle-doves indulge in a considerable amount of mutual pecking."

"You may compare yourself to a dove, if you choose, Dr. North——"

"Lionel," suggested the driver, but his companion disdained the interruption.

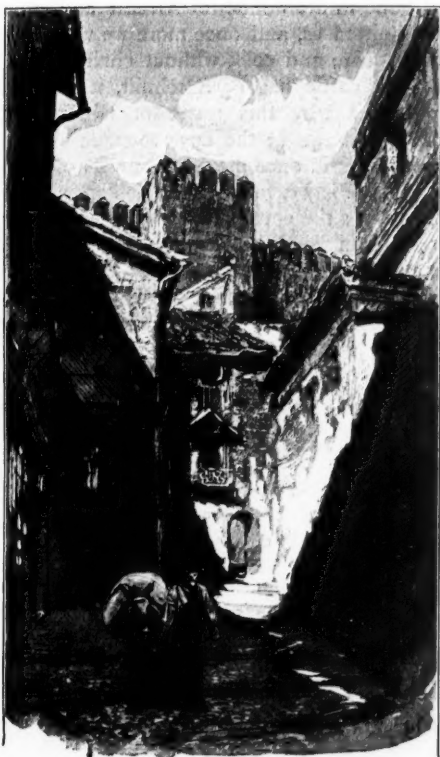
"A dove, or an ostrich, or a goose, if you will," she went on relentlessly; "but let me warn you in time, that if you want slavish obedience to whims and caprices, you had better not marry me! you will find you have to deal with a reasonable human being, not a *dove*, nor a dummy, nor a doll! I shall retain full command of my own individuality, in spite of all this premature boasting on your part."

"We'll see about that to-morrow!" said the doctor, with grim significance. "Hallo! why, here's the lodge!"

(*To be concluded.*)

THE ROMANCE OF SPAIN.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "MEMORIALS OF
MRS. HENRY WOOD," ETC., ETC.



SEGOVIA.

THE hour came when we must leave our fair Segovia. It was a sad moment. Though we had been there so short a time, the place had entwined itself about our affections. We loved it, and must love it for ever. Our days had passed as a dream; we had lived in an enchanted country. There had not been a single drawback or regret—and how seldom is this the case. In nearly all one's experiences, there comes a "but" or an "if," to qualify the charm; some fatal objection. Perfection will never be found in conditions any more than in people whilst the Canaanite is still in the land.

Yet how near perfection had our present experience proved itself.

All had come as a surprise. We knew Segovia must be beautiful; we did not know that it stood pre-eminent amidst the cities of the world. No record existed to tell us it would be one long series of impressions each more overwhelming than the last. We were not prepared to find that every hour would bring some new revelation, disclose still another charm.

Yet so it had been. And as though for once we should be doubly

blest, the skies had smiled upon us, scarce a cloud had obscured the sun. Here and there white fleecy vapours had sailed over the blue and faded into the unseen. These at sundown had caught all the gorgeous colours of gold and orange and purple, so that the rivers blushed for very joy, and the bare plains of Castile lost their chilling aspect. We visited all our beloved haunts in turn, giving them a long farewell. Life is short and time flies, and we might never look upon them again. Yet Segovia is one of those places to which a return is absolutely necessary.

For the last time we had gone to the wonderful Alcazar and rung the great bell; the porter admitted us, and once more we wandered through the rooms. They are bare and cold, without chair or table from end to end. Though the castle has been rebuilt, it remains untenanted. We asked ourselves why this waste of labour and money, if it is ever to be so. Perhaps in the days to come when a king reigns and rules in Spain, it will once more take up its old life. Once more ring with the laughter of gay cavaliers and fair dames, echo to the sound of drum and trumpet; the courtyard will dazzle with the flash of sword and helmet: and an English king may eat excellent large trout taken from the adjoining river.

The empty rooms echoed to our footsteps, breaking a tomb-like silence. These rooms were well restored and beautiful in their way; without stain or blemish; but they were hopelessly modern: old lives with a sadly new face. More than ever we regretted the melancholy fire that in a few hours had destroyed the beauty of centuries: more than ever wished the girdle of St. Anthony or the gridiron of St. Lawrence had ended the career of those terrible students. But not at all. Many are still living, full of happiness and content, flourishing like green bay trees.

The keeper of the castle, civil and obliging after the manner of the Segovians, took a pride in showing us how everything had been in the days gone by, and where restoration had departed from the original. He seemed to have studied the matter with intelligence and sympathy: unlike that famous cathedral verger we once met, who, if you asked him a question in the middle of his narrative, had to begin all over again. This humble keeper of the Alcazar was acquainted with his subject. He opened casement after casement, disclosing wonderful views, and had something to say about them all. Here was the very window from which the Infante Don Pedro had fallen from his nurse's arms, and from which she had thrown herself in her agony—let us accept the probable tradition, for who could pass through such an experience and live? We looked into the shuddering depths: a sheer precipice of wall and rock, and briar and bough, and running, gleaming water. There flowed the stream that fed the trout that rejoiced the heart of King Charles the Martyr. It was quite a House-that-Jack-built little history.

Far into the plains one traced the winding course; for the two

ivers at Segovia become one at the watersmeet. Standing immediately over this watersmeet, we watched the rivers fighting in angry defiance ; until, deciding to make the best of it, the twain became one in a *mariage de convenance*.

The old bridges spanning the river stood out, their round arches hoary with age : that dark deep-grey stone, moss-grown and lichen-stained, which only comes with time. Beyond the last bridge to the



ALCAZAR, SEGOVIA.

right stood the yellow convent of the young uncloistered monks, and yet beyond it the convent of the bare-legged—we apologise—the bare-footed Carmelites. Still further on, the Ermita de Fuencisla, where the old hermit had lived a cheerful life for a hundred years, and fared sumptuously upon dried herbs, barley bread and fresh water. Yet a little further in the plain stood the small round church of the Templars. It brought back our late visit ; the amiability of our guide, whom we had not since seen ; our extended walk to the

convent of el Parral; the sad history of the little grey old woman; all the pathos of her life which we had discovered the very first moment she approached us.

Then the keeper took us yet higher, to the battlemented roof of one of the towers, where was magic indeed: the unbroken outlines of Cathedral and town: outlines that dazzle and bewilder with their splendour, having no parallel.

We traced the ancient walls with their bastions and towers encircling this wonderful outline; jealously guarding it as one of the precious things of the earth. Far down, the long white road led to the Moorish gateway of Santiago. Round about it were avenues of trees that in summer form a shady and popular walk for the people of Segovia. The sun shines with tropical force, even when the afternoon shadows are lengthening and throwing chequered light upon the white roads. It is just at that hour that the walks are most frequented: the hour of gloaming; when the sun travels westward across the vast plain, and sinks, a great red ball, below the horizon, and gorgeous sunset colours flush the sky. Then the shadows fade; and perhaps the silver crescent of the young moon sinks westward too; and when darkness falls there is nothing left in the sky but the stars, large, flashing, wonderfully brilliant.

Gazing upon the strange scene from the tower of the Alcazar, no wonder that certain words recorded so long ago haunted the mind: "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." Here indeed were glories sufficient, and the kingdoms might easily be imagined lying beyond that distant horizon.

As we looked, the bells of the Cathedral clashed out, and the sound seemed to steal through the air across the valley and lose itself in the distant Guaderramas. In those countries under the dominion of Rome the bells are for ever clashing out; but as they swung from the great tower of Segovia: that chamber "where the bells are hung in their frames in their order," as the 16th-century Canon recorded in his diary—we must speak of him as we would of an object of ancient art, a splendid piece of wood-carving or a fine picture—their frequent peals seemed to ring out a special message, and possess a greater significance. Listening from the depths of the valley, they were so high up, so far off, that they hardly belonged to earth; whilst in their great distance, all harshness was lost in a clashing and waving of harmonious sounds.

With sad and lingering steps, too, after re-entering the town, we passed into the church of Corpus Christi, with the little Moorish nave that transported us into the very heart of Cairo and its endless mosques, and brought us into such close contact with the reign of the Moors in Spain. For here was a genuine example of those bygone times. Christianised, it is true, and with an east end out of all keeping with the nave; but from this we turned our eyes, looking only at the slender pillars and horseshoe arches, the sombre

depths, the shadows that fell athwart the pavement; feeling only the sense of mystery that haunted the spirit; almost envying the Poor Clares, who, from their tenebrous refuge behind the grating, might daily contemplate this exquisite picture with all the gratified sense of possession. A small gratification to them, no doubt. A well-spread board, the pure air of heaven, blue sky, flowers and fruit would have brought far more gladness to their hearts than a world full of Moorish remains and artistic beauties.

Onwards and downwards in our farewell walk to the Bishop's Palace, that whispered of lives of sumptuous ease and ecclesiastical pomp and dignity; and San Esteban that overshadowed its walls. Onwards to the gloomy prison, suggestive of crime and misery and suffering; of much hardness of heart and perhaps a few good resolutions to amendment of life. Onwards to the wonderful church of San Martin, with its exquisite Romanesque cloisters: a saintly vision uprising from very earthly surroundings. As the afternoon waned we watched the shadows creep away from the church and up the tower, gilding its lovely arcades. How often had we looked upon this scene: until every detail, the very steps leading to the higher ground, the very stones of the street, were rooted for ever in heart and memory. A singular irregular space, this, surrounding the church, with no plan or design about it.

A short descent quickly led to the town walls overlooking that wonderful lower view: the sea of houses with their ancient roofs, above which rose the towers of St. Millan and other churches. Below us was the Jacob's ladder, at the head of which the old woman had paused before the distant Calvary in the sunset. We had watched her go slowly down, with hands clasped in a devotion that was reflected upon her beautiful old face, until she passed between the houses out of sight. There was the Calvary far to the right, outlined against the sky, mystic and mysterious as ever, and suggestive enough to raise any spirit of devotion.

How opposite were the interests of the scene. To the left stretched the Roman Aqueduct, firm and enduring as it had been 2000 years ago. Afar off reposed the everlasting hills, which change not with the centuries. When should we look upon such a scene again? Not until we found another Segovia, for which we might search in vain.

Near us was a public fountain, at which women and boys came with their pitchers. Out of this ran some of the pure water supplied by the aqueduct. It was surrounded by all sorts and conditions of people, chattering, laughing, happy in the passing moment. They were full of life and animation, and some were fair to look upon, the Rachels of their town. Evidently, carrying water up and down hill was no hard task to them, as it had been to the fair Segovian who almost fell a victim to her bargain with the Evil one. How picturesque some of them looked with their artistic

pitchers. To the young life seemed full of happiness, as it ought to be ; a stream flowing on for ever, like the fountain. The old knew better, but they had bought their experience and paid a great price for it. Many would have been glad to have that price returned, and go back to the days of their youth. But the highway of life knows no returning.

This fountain was at the end of the long, narrow street, steep and tortuous, which led to the foot of the aqueduct. We left the Jacob's ladder and the enchanted view, and went down between the old houses, that with their quaint casements and pointed roofs, formed a wonderful outline. The sky looked very clear and blue between them. At many of the doors men were seated making shoes, as we had found them at Azpeitia, the day we visited the convent of Ignatius Loyola. That day seemed far off, so much had we seen since then ; for in travelling time is measured by events and incidents.

Towards the end of the street the aqueduct framed-in the scene ; double arches, gigantic and substantial, towered far up above the houses. There was something majestic and overpowering about this Roman structure, so sharply pencilled against the sky ; a foreshortening, as we looked up, almost too violent and terrible. Everything was hopelessly dwarfed, and we felt crushed to mere atoms. It was marvellous how these loose stones placed one upon another had stood unmoved for 2000 years. But those builders of old knew what they were about ; if many secrets were hidden from them, they did not include the art of construction.

Near the aqueduct was a picturesque fountain, which might have stood there for centuries. It was attached to the wall of a garden, and creepers—hanging roses, the gay nasturtium and graceful convolvulus—fell above it in rich profusion. In the garden behind one traced a wealth of greenery ; orange trees with their dark foliage, and trellis-work over which vine leaves trailed : an oasis in a desert of houses.

Through the pillars and arches of the aqueduct, stretched in deep repose the plains of Castile, with all their historical interest : ancient towns and mediæval castles, and sparkling rivers that water many an earthly paradise. On this side the aqueduct, at right angles with the quaint old street, the city walls went upwards in all their charm of tone, bastion beyond bastion. Under their very shadow are groves of elms and poplars, and by moving a few yards to the right, or slightly ascending the hill, we caught sight of the convent of el Parral and the Templars' church. By the riverside, in the depression, stood the old Mint : and listening attentively one heard the falling waters of the weir that help to turn the mill wheel.

The whole seemed to form almost one complete group of buildings. El Parral itself rose in picturesque outlines of tiled roofs and dependencies, the church tower standing out against the bare plains that fell away to the far-off horizon, guiltless of tree or shrub or any redeeming

quality. A lovely arcade was just visible stretching down one side of the cloister quadrangle, immediately under the red-tiled roof. Between this and the city walls near which we stood, tall poplars threw up their pointed fringes to the sky, their shadows falling athwart the



SEGOVIA.

flashing stream, across the slanting, slated roofs of the old mill with their dormer windows and little turrets. The outer walls of el Parral with their strong buttresses seemed to reach almost to the very doors of the mill, an exquisite tone of antiquity over all: the whole view

gilded and rejuvenated by the glorious sunshine; the running water murmuring its tale of happiness and communicating all the charm of its song to the heart of man.

But we have not done with our old fountain. It gives refreshment to man and beast alike, dividing its favours impartially. Water flows abundantly into broad troughs; rich generous streams out of the mouths of lions or gorgons. As we look, group after group of women come up with pails and pitchers. Often their attitudes would drive an artist distracted at such opportunities lost for ever.

But group after group of mules and donkeys also take their turn at the fountain, which is broad enough for all. The drivers are distinctly more aggressive than their animals; they evidently possess an artistic eye, and their polite attentions to the fair drawers of water are a little too pointed. Many a good-natured passage-at-arms ensues; and in more than one instance, a bold kiss is followed by a sousing that ought to cool the most ardent flame. Shouts of laughter make the very arches of the aqueduct blink with astonishment, and every one seems to appreciate the situation excepting the unfortunate hero of the drama. Yet he will do the same to-morrow if opportunity arises. Experience may bring with it an attack of acute rheumatism, wisdom follows more slowly. This is one of the pictures of Segovia for ever fixed upon our mind.

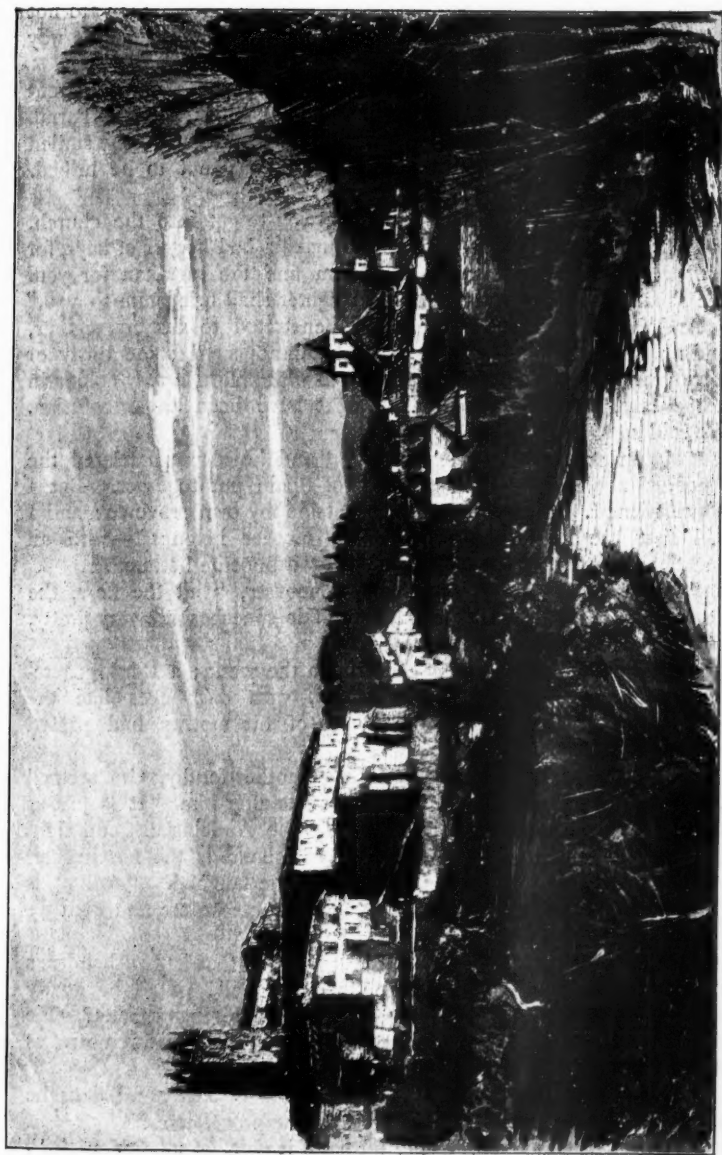
We are now on a level with the outer town, on which we have gazed so often within the city walls above the Jacob's ladder. It is wonderful, no matter what the point of view, and here the church towers rise conspicuously above the houses.

To one small church which had hitherto escaped us we made our way. It was not far from St. Millan, and we found it a little Romanesque gem. The interior must surely correspond with its outward charm; but the door was locked, and there seemed to be no sacristan at hand. As we paused in perplexity, an old woman with a very white but kindly face appeared at the open window of an adjoining house, and asked our mission. We explained that we had no mission, but that H. C. was a great poet who would write a sonnet to her eyebrows if she would open the church to us.

The old woman smiled and blushed; yes, even at her mature age.

"You are making fun of me," she said. "My days of beauty are over—but I have had them."

Which was quite possible, for she still had a very smooth and comely face in her old age, a rare feature amongst women of her rank and nation. To this her pale colour and white hair added a certain refinement. But the pathetic element was wanting; there was no suggestion of sorrow and suffering in her dark eyes. This does not come to all, for there are many whose emotions are not very profound or acute. If trouble comes, they shake it off easily. It does not penetrate. They need no advice not to meet sorrow half-way, refusing to see it at the very threshold, closing their doors



EL PARRAL AND THE OLD MINT.

against it and thinking hopefully of the morrow. These natures often escape sorrow and suffering. As it would do no good, they are not unnecessarily tried. They are small natures, and in their little way extract much honey out of life.

Such, seemingly, was the old woman before us—a very different nature from the pale ghost that haunted the cloisters of el Parral. But her figure framed by the window was very picturesque. She smiled at H. C.'s compliment, and declared she was not to be bribed. She had had her day.

"Nevertheless," she said, "I can help you to get into the church. No, I am not the sacristan. I should make a bad keeper of keys, for they would always go astray. But I can find the sacristan for you. He lives round the corner, and my daughter shall bring him to you."

And then her voice was raised and penetrated to distant regions, and a far-off voice replied. Next, a woman appeared, some thirty or forty years younger than the mother: no white hairs, a rosy colour in her cheeks, soft blue eyes. She might have been an Andalusian. We said so to her.

"My father was one," she replied; "and he always declared the Andalusians were worth all the rest of Spain put together. But I do not know. I have never been outside my own province: and I feel that the country to which my mother belongs"—with an affectionate glance at the older woman—"cannot be bettered."

"That is all very well," laughed the mother, "but the keys, the keys of the church. Compliments and fair speeches are very pretty, but they will not bring the sacristan."

At this moment a child appeared upon the scene; a third generation; the son of the younger woman, with dark eyes like the grandmother. The heavenly-blue eyes of his mother had passed him by.

"His father is a Castilian," said the mother fondly, who seemed made up of human kindness, "and he takes after him. It is just as well. The Castillians are stronger than the Andalusians, and fight their way better through the world. My husband is the head verger of the cathedral—quite an official person," she laughed. "And it is respectable, and sure and safe. We know where we are and what we can do."

H. C. turned a shade paler. Was it possible that her husband was the man he had wished to throw down the well? Had he nearly made this fair woman a widow and her children orphans? He slightly shuddered. There was anxiety in his tones, even remorse, as he asked:

"Does your husband keep the keys of the cloisters, and does he sometimes wear a scarlet gown, and head the processions?"

"Oh no," she laughed. "My husband is chief of all. You don't often see him. He never loiters about to conduct people over the cathedral—birds watching for prey, I call them. He has more

important work to think about, and attends very much personally upon our good bishop."

H. C. drew a sigh of relief; and such is the inconsistency of human nature and the deceitfulness of the human heart, immediately began to regret that lost opportunity in the cathedral cloisters.

All this time the sun was pursuing his steady upward course, and the moments were flying. It was a hot and brilliant morning, and down in this lower town one felt in midsummer regions. When it is really midsummer the heat must be tropical.

"Are you going for the sacristan or not?" cried the old grandmother from the casement—for the younger woman had joined us in the little open square, and we stood at the top of the flight of steps, which added so much to the Romanesque outlines above them.

The younger woman laughed. She had seen H. C.'s admiration glowing in his eyes, and fair-woman-like, was not above gratifying her vanity by a slight and innocent flirtation. Still, as we represented to H. C. in many an excellent council after the manner of Mentor, these experiences are more or less playing with edged tools—where the temperament, as in his case, is susceptible. On this occasion she turned to her mother with a laugh, and with a friendly nod to H. C., caught up her child's hand and rapidly disappeared down the steps and beyond the church.

"She is a good daughter, and a good wife and mother," said the old woman, "but I doubt me thinks too much of her fair face."

"Perhaps that is an inherited weakness," suggested H. C.

"You bad man!" she retorted, laughing. "I was ever bashful and retiring, the perfection of modesty: and should never have discovered I had beauty if I had not been told so."

A statement we felt we might fairly doubt without disloyalty.

"What do you expect to find in the church, that you are so anxious to enter?" she continued. "You will only be disappointed. I admit there is something fine in the exterior, but the inside is poor and plain. Ah! here comes Antonio the sacristan. Now you will see for yourselves."

A young man, looking like a gnome or a Cornish miner, for he was bright brown-red of face and bright brown-red of dress—a most curious apparition—came flying up the steps keys in hand, and greeted us with a homely salutation.

"If the senores would follow him he would have the honour of showing them the church." And applying his keys to the locks the great door creaked on its rusty hinges.

"Mephistopheles!" said H. C., pointing to our strange conductor. "Nothing but horns and tail wanting. It is just like that scene in Faust. But where is Gretchen? Poor Gretchen! Is she not a beautiful character?"

We composed ourselves and put on our Mentor expression, wondering what Lady Maria would say to such a sentiment; but

perhaps he was only thinking of her punishment, her repentance and her beautiful end. So making no reply, we followed our Mephistopheles into the church. The old woman had spoken too truly—we had our waiting for our pains. It was a very miserable interior without a redeeming point; as different from the exquisite exterior as imagination could conceive. A glance at the cold, white-washed, ill-favoured outlines was sufficient, and we went back into the sunshine and the grateful warmth.

"I told you so," said the old woman—that dreadful sentence that so often rings in our ears from the kindly Job's comforters of the world after a hopeless mistake or a crushing error of judgment. "I told you so," marking our disappointed expressions. "It is an old barn of a church inside, and not worth the fee you bestow upon the sacristan. But, poor fellow, it won't come amiss to him. He works hard to supply his daily wants."

"What makes him so red?" we asked. "He might almost paint his face, and looks half a Zulu."

"Nobody knows why he is so brown-red or red-brown—which is it?—one can hardly tell," she laughed. "His father and mother were not so, but were ordinary worthy Castillians. We think he must have had a Moor in some far-away ancestor who has come up again in him. That is not impossible in Segovia. He has a brown-red mania upon him and never wears anything but brown-red clothes, summer and winter, Sundays and week-days, work-days and holidays. But he is good and industrious, and lives at peace with his neighbours. He is quite sane too, for if he has a twist in the brain, it amounts only to wearing these clothes which match the colour of his face. That and jealousy for his wife. For he has married a wife, and has two lovely children, not a bit brown-red like himself. The Moorish ancestor has retired into the background. Very wisely, for we do not like the Moors in Spain."

The good old woman probably little knew or appreciated how much Spain owed to the Moors, and how she would have lost half her romance, but for that strange and little-understood people. At this juncture the brown-red sacristan reappeared on one side, and the old woman's daughter with her child came hurrying up the steps. "Loretta, you have been gossiping at the well," cried the old grandmother from her elevation. "At least you might have taken your pitcher and filled it. We want water."

"Not at all," laughed Loretta. "You are mistaken, madre. I have not been to the well, but stayed talking to Antonio's wife,"—laughing and looking at the brown-red sacristan. "I asked her for the hundredth time when he was going to put on Christian apparel; and the poor thing has come to that pass she said she had given it up; she didn't know and she didn't care. He was a good husband and that was enough for her. But what do you think she told me? She said that the bishopric here was to be quite free, and not to be under

Valladolid any longer. That would be a fine thing for our Bishop, and a good thing too for the husband, who would come in for something extra. Pray heaven it be true."

"But it is not true," returned Antonio. "There has certainly been such a rumour, and Luisa has heard it, and woman-like jumps to the conclusion that it is a settled thing. But I tell you it is not so. Do not imagine that what has lasted for centuries is going to be lightly disturbed. Your man will have to depend upon his good conduct and the Bishop's favour for promotion."

"Promotion!" cried the grandmother; "who wants promotion? Be content. You have all you need, and every want supplied. What more do you expect in life? Jewels and fine clothes? Jewels are for the good Queen, and fine clothes are for Antonio," pointing to his smart-coloured suit.



OLD ROOFS, SEGOVIA.

Antonio took it in good part. "It is my pleasure," he said. "I like this colour. It is warm and bright, like the blood that runs in the veins. Then everybody sees me coming. 'It is only Antonio,' they cry. 'Come in, Antonio.' My wife knows me a mile off, and is always ready with dinner when I have been out of a morning. My red clothes and my red face hurt nobody—and I don't like changes."

"Every man to his taste," replied the grandmother. "If you choose to wear one leg red and the other yellow, and a green coat to your back, like a clown, it is no one's affair but your own. But come, Loretta, here is your pitcher. Go down to the fountain and don't spend all your time gossiping."

The artistic piece of pottery appeared at the window, and to our astonishment dropped from the first floor into Loretta's arms, who caught it cleverly and gracefully. The pitcher exactly suited the woman's picturesque style; and as she went off laughing, wishing us

good-day and fair weather for our travels, her lovely child trotting by her side, we thought we had seldom seen a prettier group.

The old woman watched her pass down the steps and out of sight, a half-regretful expression in her brown Castillian eyes. "Ah, youth, youth!" she cried. "Who would not always be young, and live in a golden atmosphere instead of a grey? It is the one thing I have never got over—growing old. But I try to forget my years. I sing at my work, and I sit and spin in the sunshine, and I never look at myself in the glass. By that means I try to cheat old age, and I am happy."

"You cheat more than old age," returned H. C. gallantly. "You are unjust to your looking-glass, which you deprive of a beautiful reflection."

The old woman looked pleased; evidently thought H. C. a man of taste and discrimination, and finally shook her head incredulously.

Our brown-red Antonio had gone off with his keys and his gratuity, well pleased with the world and himself; and as far as one could tell, poor, industrious and contented, he need envy no man on earth. We also departed, feeling that in spite of a disappointing interior, our time had not been wasted. These interludes, unexpected and unsought, brought us into slight contact with the people, and showed us a little of their tone and disposition, something of their mind and manners. The women seemed, as a rule, better than the men; more earnest, hard-working and dependable. Spain given over into their keeping would be a more prosperous country than it is.

As we went down the steps, and turned round by the church, the grandmother watching us out of sight, we met Loretta and her pitcher coming from the well. The pitcher was full, and she carried it gracefully, as they all do, resting lightly upon her hip. The rich red of the pottery, as we have said, harmonised wonderfully with her fair Andalusian beauty. Her child trotted and babbled by her side, a small earthly cherub, brimming over with unconscious happiness.

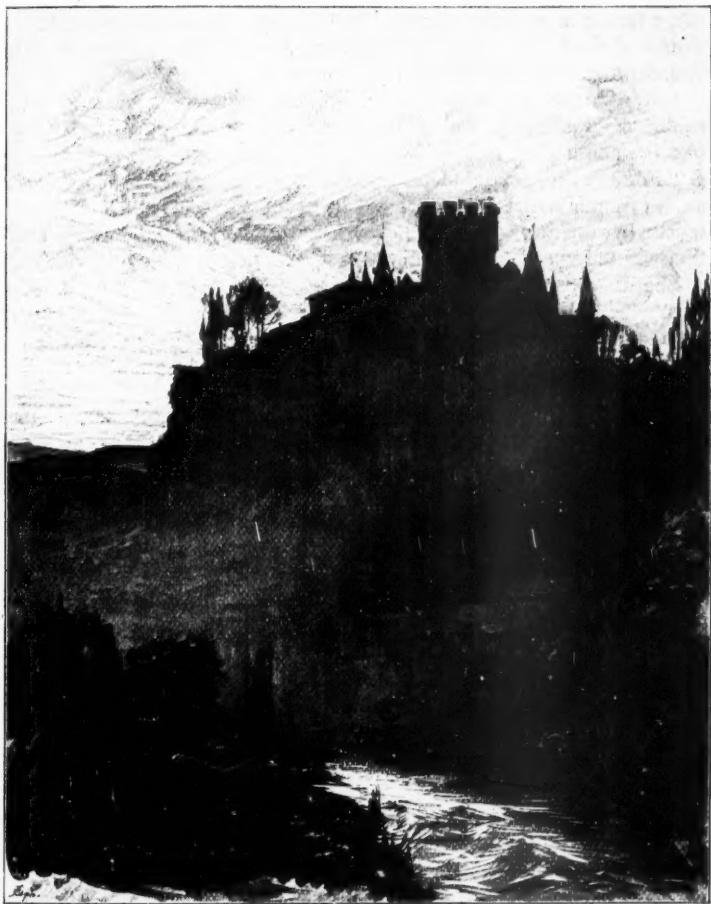
"So you have obeyed the mother, and not gossiped at the well, Loretta," we remarked.

"For a good reason," she laughed; "there was no one to gossip with. I found myself absolutely alone at the well, and it does not happen once in a hundred times."

"Then you had not even the merit of resisting temptation?"

"I am really not a gossip," she returned; "but who ever heard of going to the well and not exchanging words with one's neighbours? Whilst the pitcher fills we hear the news of the town. Life would be dull if we never used our tongues. It is only the mother's way. She thinks of her young days when she too went chatting and lingering to the well—and came to no harm, though many another did, perhaps. I know nothing about it. I had no chance, for I married

my good man as soon as I was of sufficient age. He waited for me," she added rather proudly, "for he is fifteen years older than I am; but there isn't a handsomer man in Segovia. Many a half-lady with a good dowry would have had him. This child, José," turning to the cherub, "is his image in miniature. No Andalusian he, but a



ALCAZAR, SEGOVIA.

dark-eyed Castilian, like all his people. And he is the bishop's right hand. Ah! there goes Antonio—and his pretty wife Luisa with him. She, too, is going to the well, and he never lets her go alone. That is his one fault. He is a jealous man, madly in love with his wife, and thinks everyone must be in love with her too. There they go.

Luisa carries her pitcher to the well, empty ; Antonio carries it back full. I have to do both," she laughed. "I would not see my husband carrying a pitcher. It is woman's work."

"Loretta," we observed, "if you are not gossiping at the well, you are gossiping here. What will the mother say?"

"Oh, but there is a distinction," H. C. hastily put in. "With me she could not possibly come to any harm—beauteous creature. I would defend her against a hundred foes." He had put on his Napoleon manner very strongly.

"It was not a question of harm, but of wasting of time," we said. "Qui s'excuse, s'accuse. There does not seem the shadow of a foe about here, or friend either. The place is deserted."

"Foe?" said Loretta, looking puzzled ; "there are no foes here. We are all friends and neighbours, and live at peace. Our little colony is quite a byword and proverb in Segovia. 'As happy as the San Millans,' they will tell you, for that is our parish, and that is what they call us."

She went her way with her pitcher and her cherub, and we went ours. A little lower down we met Antonio and his wife also returning from the well. He was carrying the well-filled pitcher, the same artistically-shaped pottery that is here so general.

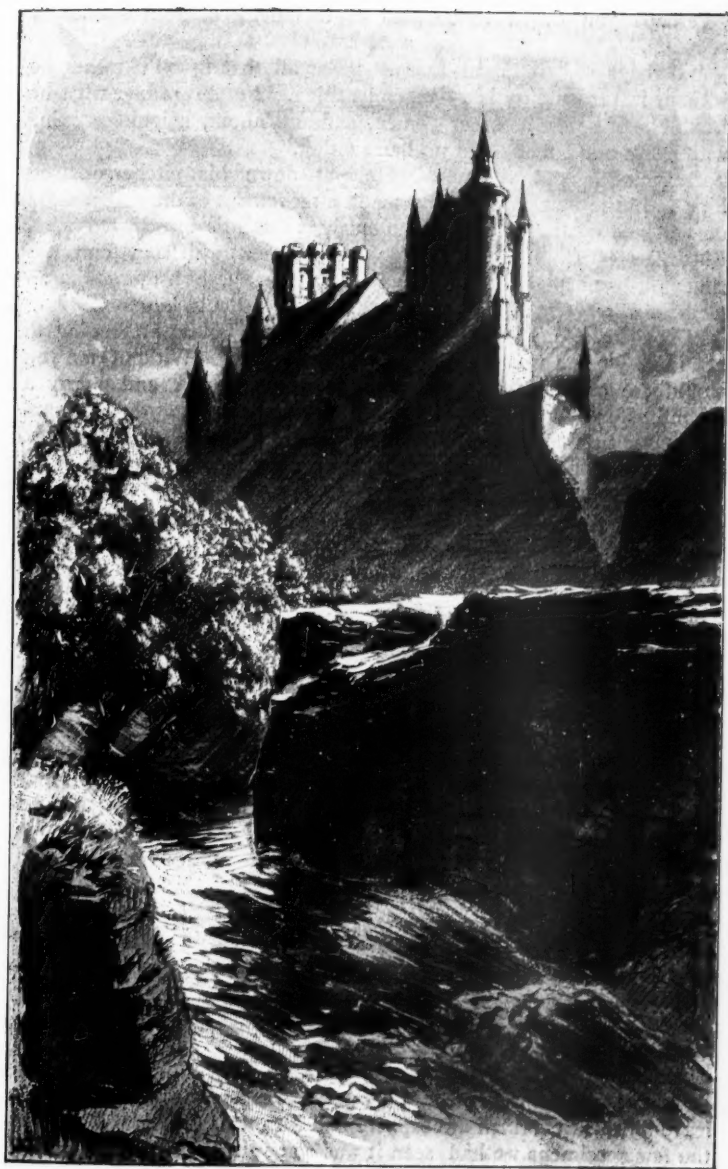
He bowed to us with quite the air of a grand seigneur. The man was a strange mixture of simplicity, dignity and the ludicrous. We stopped to speak to his wife. She was a small pretty Castillian, with a high colour and flashing eyes ; a sensible face that would battle well with the world and take life very much as she found it. If Antonio in his dress reminded one slightly of Mephistopheles, there was nothing of the dreamy, romantic, yielding Gretchen about Luisa.

A very different woman, too, from Loretta. She had not the grand Andalusian beauty of the latter, and was a far less striking figure. But pretty and feminine she undoubtedly was, with a very sweet-tempered expression joined to her sense and firmness ; a woman to make her home happy and well ordered. Antonio had some excuse for his worship, if none for his jealousy. Her sense was common-sense—perhaps the most uncommon of all ; it was very different from the romantic, somewhat ambitious mind of the fair Andalusian.

"We have been to the well, senores. This is my wife Luisa. I always go with her to carry the pitcher. She is not strong enough to bear heavy weights."

"It is not that," laughed Luisa. "I can carry my pitcher just as well as Antonio. No delicate mortal am I. That is not the true reason. He will not let me go to the well alone because he is jealous of others talking to me. It is his one fault, and heaven knows I give him no cause. I have eyes and thoughts only for him and the children, and keeping the home tidy. Foolish man!" she laughed looking at him with mock severity.

Antonio's face was redder than ever. He winced slightly under the just accusation.



ALCAZAR, SEGOVIA.

"But jealousy, they declare, is a proof of love, Luisa," we said. "Perhaps you ought to be glad of this mark of your husband's affection."

"Perhaps so," returned Luisa. "For all that I would rather be without it, for jealousy is a dangerous thing. I often wonder what he would be if I were as other women, gadding about, laughing, flirting with every one I met—and no harm either."

Antonio looked volumes. He put down his pitcher, placed himself in the first position, and made a movement of drawing a sham dagger. It was impossible not to laugh at the little brown-red man, who, like H. C. put on a Napoleon manner, which in him was ridiculously misplaced. He laughed at himself, but there was an element of tragedy in his tone as he said: "I should kill you."

"You make my blood run cold," laughed Luisa, pretending to shudder. "And what good would that do you? Without me you would die of grief. Or perhaps you would survive and marry a second wife; and she would be a shrew and would lead you a demon-life. What a fine revenge I should have!"

They were like two children in their happiness, and evidently no cloud came between. The wife's good sense saved them, for it was a dangerous element, as she had observed, this jealousy, especially in the impulsive passionate Spanish temperament.

"There is our home," said Antonio, abruptly changing the subject, probably feeling it was rather turning against him.

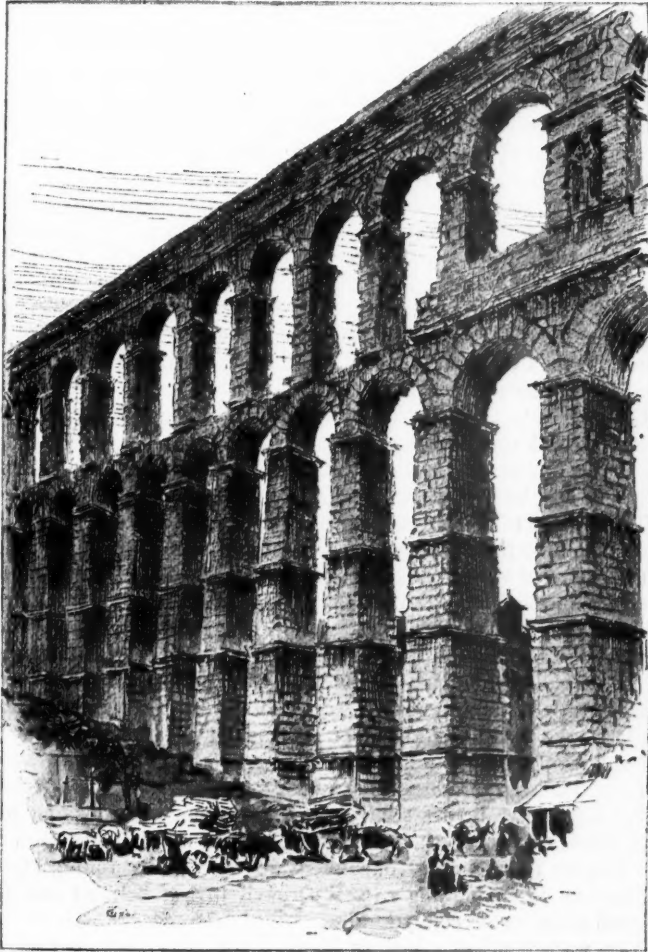
He pointed to a house a little higher up the hill; one of the prizes in the lottery. A small, picturesque abode that might have come out of Noah's Ark, with latticed panes, and a wonderful old red-tiled roof with eaves projecting, a dormer window adding to its charm. Ancient it looked, but not dilapidated or neglected. The windows were clean, and clean white curtains hung before them. Evidently no slovenly housewife reigned there. One half the lower window was a shop, displaying small wares; the other half belonged to Antonio, where he plied his tailor's trade—for Antonio was nothing more romantic than a tailor. He made his own red clothes, as well as the less conspicuous garments of his neighbours.

"There we live," he said, "and whilst Luisa sells her goods on the one side, I work on the other. And so we just manage to pay our way. Our neighbours are not rich and we have to be contented with small profits."

"We have all we want," returned Luisa, "and two lovely children to 'add to our wealth. If we were not contented we should not deserve to dwell in the happy colony of St. Millan's."

They too went their way, and we continued ours, almost sorry to leave all this St. Millan atmosphere and influence behind us. From the few specimens we had seen it was certainly a Happy Land. We almost felt that here must dwell the beautiful old woman who had passed down Jacob's Ladder that sunset evening and gazed in ecstasy

upon the distant Calvary. We looked about, hoping to discover her, but she was nowhere visible. No doubt she was to be found behind one of those latticed panes, but there was no mesmeric influence to bring her to the front.



AQUEDUCT, SEGOVIA.

We passed the fountain on our way down, and if deserted when Loretta went to it, now it was crowded enough. A chorus of female voices rose upon the air; an assemblage of chattering magpies. But we recognised none of them, and would not wait to be disillusioned

of our St. Millan impressions. Most of these women no doubt dwelt outside the charmed circle, but how discriminate?

Still onwards, until presently we came to the broad fountain dwelling under the shadow of the aqueduct—and what shadows that aqueduct cast over the plains, across streets and houses! The usual scene was going on. Groups of men and women, laughing, flirting, squabbling; the women enjoying it as much as the men; nay, taking the lead, and drawing the young men on with a language of the eyes that is born with them, and for which no special instruction is needed. Groups of patient donkeys waiting their turn to drink. Above, creepers fell over the high dead wall, and beyond it one traced the vine-trellised fruit-laden, flower-scented garden.

Yet onwards, leaving all this animated scene, and passing at once into a comparatively dead world. Up the hill-side, beside the ancient walls of the town, with their battlemented outlines and towers, rich in colour, solid and dignified, for all their crumbling appearance. Well may they stand firm and immovable, one of the first and chiefest of Segovia's attractions: still more picturesque, if less ancient and wonderful than the aqueduct that towers near them and watched their growing outlines in the early centuries.

Upwards into the long avenues of elms and poplars, where the Segovians walk on summer evenings, and love vows are exchanged by the young, and the old ask each other in what consisted the charm of early life, and how and when and where it unconsciously evaporated.

Then down to the river, crossing the weir to the other side into a paradise of nature. Young trees, an abundance of green, flourished in the sheltered valley. The weir for ever frothed and splashed and lifted its musical voice to the air, a miniature waterfall. Near it reposed the ancient Mint, with its grey-tiled roofs and small turrets. It was all very picturesque and romantic; and if the old building had to be utilised, and made to play its part in the work-a-day world, wiser to turn it into a flour-mill than a factory with tall chimneys and black smoke. We shuddered as we thought of the possibility; a real shudder, not a sham one, like Luisa's.

As we looked, the miller came to the door and wished us good-day.

We had never before seen him: a tall, thin, grave-looking man, with great dark eyes that shone out of his white, floury face. It was just as though every one knew we were going round upon a melancholy task: bidding a final farewell to our beloved haunts—beloved though so recently known.

The worthy miller asked us if we would like to look over the ancient premises.

"Rather wish us good-morrow," we replied to his greeting; "for to-morrow Segovia's sun will not rise for us, and we shall have left our spirit behind us. Segovia has no rival."

"In fact, it will be a case of astral body," said H. C. But the miller had never heard about astral bodies.

"Nothing lasts," returned our miller. "It is a constant coming and going in this world. Everything is always changing. Even in my little life no two days are ever alike. Sometimes I think I see a difference in the very corn I grind. The very machinery seems to work day by day with a new voice."

Then he took us over his mill. We trod within walls that had stood for ages. How much remained of what had been? Little or nothing. These were very different days from those when the coinage was struck here, and bags of silver and gold reposed in the deep dark cellars. Now there were only bags of flour, and the complexion of the place was white. In place of coining-instruments immense grindstones rolled heavily as they crushed the grain. Rooms, floors, partitions, all had changed.

Everything was quiet when we entered, but the miller pulled a string, and immediately there set up a rumbling and creaking and groaning, a sound of chains and machinery such as one might have imagined in Dante's *Inferno*. The rushing of the weir was completely drowned. The miller smiled at our bewilderment; we had to shout to be heard.

"There is something peculiar about the place," he said. "They built in the past as they do not build to-day. Always we have this strange reverberation and echo, as though we had hollow walls about us that absorbed all the sound and gave it out again with double force. But the walls are sound and substantial; there is nothing hollow about them."

"How long has it been a mill?" we asked.

"I hardly know," replied the miller. "I have been here ten years, and before that I was at San Sebastian. We do not belong to Segovia, and though I have lived here so long, I know little about the place and people. We are friendly with our neighbours; but when I have done my day's work I am tired and like to be quiet, and my wife is an invalid. So far life for us has not very much change. It is grinding corn all the year round, and watching the sunrise and sunset—and little else."

"Do you see anything of the old woman in the cloisters of *el Parral*?" we asked him.

"A little," he replied. "Poor thing! The tragedy of her life took place long before we came here, but one sees it all in her face. We get her to come to us, sometimes. She will spend an afternoon or an evening with the wife, and go back to her cloister quite cheerful and revived: only to look sadder than ever the next morning. We ask ourselves whether it is a kindness or the opposite to lure her from her solitude."

"It must be a kindness," we said. "The mistake was, ever to allow her to take up her abode in that world-forgotten spot, where no strange footstep echoes from one week's end to another."

"The last time she came," continued the miller—"it was Sunday

evening and the mill was at rest—she told us that her hours were numbered. She had had a vision or a dream in which her lost ones had come to her with some sign or message to the effect that her pilgrimage was almost over. Very shortly they would be re-united. She seemed quite jubilant over it. We had never seen her so cheerful and so like other people. But on meeting her next morning it was the same sad face as usual. We thought we would try and laugh her out of it. 'Have you had another vision to say the time is put off?' we asked her. She shook her head. 'I realised it all yesterday,' she said, 'but to-day it seems as far off as ever. Nevertheless I know it is near. You will see that before this day month, my life's hope will have come to me. I shall no longer be here.' And it will be a happy release," concluded the miller.

With that he pulled a cord again, and the machinery stopped, and silence fell upon the mill. Once more we heard the falling of the weir. We bade him good-bye, and he accompanied us to the river-side, where the water sparkled and flashed in the sunshine. The leaves of the trees about us whispered and rustled, and they too glinted and gleamed as they caught the sun's reflection.

High up, the town-walls stood out boldly. Groups of donkeys were passing through the gateway of Santiago, trotting down the long white hill. The miller went back to his work, and in a few moments we heard the roll of the machinery grinding the corn. As we went our way, he put his head out at a window and waved us a grave salutation.

A few minutes more and we found ourselves gazing for the last time upon the outlines of the Templars' church. It looked striking and effective as ever; stood out in the same strong relief against the background of blue sky. But there was no amiable guide at hand to-day to open the doors to us. He, no doubt, was at his dry work in the Town-hall, bending over parish taxes and city estimates. Segovia has no County Council to arrange matters according to its own sweet will—it has still many mercies to be thankful for.

We passed on outside the walls of the bare-footed Carmelites, and just by the old bridge met a detachment of the young uncloistered monks.

Insensibly we thought of our late fellow-traveller, the gentleman-monk who had renounced the certain pomps and vanities, pleasures and pains of the world, for the uncertain rest and repose and religious progress of a Carthusian monastery. Where was he now? What doing? What thoughts—hopes—regrets were working within his soul? His very refinement of nature must protest against many of the surrounding influences. Few companions would he find amongst the cloaked and hooded monks of the Order. To be in contact with the greater part would be repellent to him. We felt moved to seek him out; warn him afresh of the danger he was running;

bid him return to the world and play his part nobly. In its higher pleasures and aspirations, its duties fulfilled, he would find greater strength and religious consolation than in the colourless convent life. We would bid him read Fénelon, great and good amongst the greatest and best of men, who ever protested against this weak withdrawal from the world.

Raising our eyes as we pondered, whilst the young monks had filed within their walls, we saw before us all the outlines of Segovia. The wonderful domes and towers and pinnacles of the cathedral rising heavenwards seemed to bear out our train of thought: that in the world and in battling with the world, we should make our way to the higher life.

Once more the marvellous view impressed us as absolutely unique and matchless. The greatest artist could never have imagined so perfect a composition. The Alcazar crowned its rocky precipice, and below at the watersmeet the troubled streams rushed into their one existence. Over all the sun poured his dazzling rays. It was a majestic scene, upon which those distant cathedral outlines threw the charm and influence of absolute repose.

We climbed the long white hill and passed through the gateway of Santiago into the town. Later, we found ourselves—we hardly knew how—once more and for the very last time in the church of Corpus Christi.



SEGOVIA.

Service was going on : an Eastern perfume of incense hung about the lovely pillars and arches. Behind the screen hooded figures were dimly outlined in the obscurity. A soft murmur of penitential voices floated through the air, a Gregorian monotone inexpressibly sad seemed to die away in unseen recesses. The greatest criminals could have done no more by way of visible atonement. More than ever we felt that life was never intended for this.

The body of the church was empty, and the scene was only the more impressive. Service was concluding. The old priest turned and lifted his hand in benediction. There was something beautiful about his face and expression, the well-shaped head and flowing white hair : a great exception to the generality of the priests one saw. A head fitted for a mitre. If our gentleman-monk had entered the church instead of the cloister, we felt that in time he might have become such an ecclesiastic as now stood before us with hand upraised, and a voice that came from the heart, subdued from emotion.

Without sound, almost without movement, the hooded figures glided from behind the screen. The lights were extinguished on the altar. The old priest passed through the doorway, bowing to us as he went out. He evidently meant it as a sign of fatherhood and brotherhood : and we, of the same Christian faith, but not of the same Roman creed or ritual, gladly responded.

We too passed out. Our moments in Segovia were numbered. We had gone through a wonderful experience, a strange eventful history. Never had the unexpected been so full of surprise, so full of charm. If we closed our eyes we were dazzled by a marvellous assemblage of outlines stamped for ever upon memory and imagination. We felt confused and bewildered as one gem after another rose up and passed before us in a vivid mental panorama. Almost all seemed of equal value and interest ; a succession of grand monuments and impressions. The outlines of the town were full of endless magic. Perhaps the beauty and repose and solemnity of the cathedral, its exquisite cloisters, haunted by the dignified figure of the bishop, placed itself in the foreground ; but undoubtedly the most impressive scene of all, running riot in thought and fancy, was that on which we gazed from the south bank of the river : the bold and frowning precipice crowned by the Alcazar, emblem of the militant power on earth, the town-walls rising behind it, above which uprose the outlines of the cathedral, emblem of the peace of heaven. Nature and art could not go beyond this.

We entered our primitive inn for the last time, and looked a farewell round our rooms. In the artistic kitchen the old woman and chef reigned together. She was still peeling potatoes, and we came to the conclusion that she had been appointed Potato-Peeler-in-Chief to the whole town. The chef stood up faultless in cap and apron and bowed his farewell, like Antonio, *en grand seigneur*.

"Ah, senores," quavered the old woman, "you are preparing to leave. I am sorry, and you will be sorry. You are quitting our beautiful Segovia for that ugly and wicked Madrid, where the devil lurks at every corner for his prey, and catches only too many victims. Don't let him catch you."

"Peace, woman," cried the chef. "Madrid, senores, is an earthly paradise; and if I might make so free, I would beg you to give it my best affections. There at least one can live and enjoy one's days; whilst as for Segovia——"

The old woman rose up like an avenging power, and holding forth a claw-like hand clutching her knife, seemed about to plunge it into the heart of the chef. We felt we would not wait for the catastrophe, and turned to the little group waiting to escort us to the omnibus.

The shades of night had fallen as we crossed the square for the last time, and the outlines of the cathedral rose darkly against the darker sky beyond. The streets were putting on their weird aspect as eaves and dormer windows and eastern casements and narrowing perspectives grew faint and unreal. The city walls seemed to be guarding a town pregnant with mysterious shadows and mighty whisperings of the past. The broad fountain was deserted and the water ran in neglected prodigality. As we passed under the Roman Aqueduct we almost shuddered at the crushing weight of stone that upreared itself in all its majestic outlines and arches. We curved round by the sleeping houses, the closed and silent churches. Again we reconnoitred the solitary building whose doors had opened on our first arrival to admit the warlike youth with his clanking sword and gun. To-night its dark and frowning walls might have held some mighty inquisitorial secret of life and death.

And then away from it all. The dream was over; Segovia was no more. But even the commonplace railway-station possessed a charm denied to all other stations, for there in large letters one read the magic name, possessing a worldful of meaning and charm and delight; an infinite variety age could never wither nor custom stale. As we steamed away we felt that if the world possessed but one Spain, Spain possessed but one Segovia. We thought of Thorwaldsen, and how he wept when he had completed his *chef-d'œuvre*, because he could never surpass it—and we sympathised with him, and understood. Even the attainment of perfection has its sad side.

Through the cold and barren plains of Castile, now shrouded in night, we were soon journeying towards Madrid. But no picturesque monk was at hand to pour out his confidences into charmed and listening ears: and closing our eyes to the world around, we lived over again, in all their magic and reality, our days and experiences in Segovia. There truly and indeed, in far greater measure than we had yet found it, dwelt the ROMANCE OF SPAIN.

IN BRETON LAND.

AWAY, to Breton land, away!
Where hearts are light and songs are gay,
Where peasants, tripping as they go,
The gavotte tread, and jabado.
Our barque by summer breezes fanned,
Bears us away to Breton land!

Where sainted Anne her vigil holds
O'er *Auray* and her peaceful folds,
Where *Carnac's* Menhirs bleach the plain,
And through the centuries remain;
Among her cromlechs old we stand,
The marvels of the Breton land!

And where *Rosporden's* maids unite
At mass, in coifs of snowy white;
Where humble peasants of the soil,
At *Scaer* contented spin and toil—
O happy day, when first we planned
To wander through the Breton land!

We see *Concarneau's* fishing boats
All hung with sardine nets and floats,
Like gossamer of varied hue,
Pale brown, and silver-grey and blue.
Anon her coast by us is scanned—
The rocky coast of Breton land.

Quimper's twin spires majestic rise,
Piercing the blue of summer skies,
And *Chateaulin* as in a dream,
Reflects her fair face in the stream.
There flock her stalwart sons and tanned,
In "bragon bras" of Breton land.

We watch *Landerneau's* flowing tide
Beneath her ancient houses glide,
And roam at *Morlaix*, fancy free,
In mediæval Brittany.
For Time seems motionless to stand
In this quaint spot of Breton land.

St. Pol his sons to worship calls,
Within the Creisker's holy walls,
At friendly *Roscoff* by the sea,
Crowd fisher-folk upon the quay,
Who ply their trade 'twixt England and
This sunny port of Breton land.

We kneel in *Guingamp's* sacred pile,
As daylight dies on niche and aisle
The sculptured saints, the chapels dim,
The vaulted nave, the columns slim,
Invite to worship. Mystic, grand,
The churches of the Breton land!

Brieuc the Saint, of holy fame,
Who gave the ancient town its name,
From Britain came in days of yore,
To teach the Druids Christian lore,
Bearing the cross within his hand,
This mission saint of Breton land.

On *Vitré's* gabled houses old,
Pours the weird moonlight pure and cold,
Flooding the castle on the height,
And ramparts grim, with shimmering light,
And the broad moat by drawbridge spanned—
Beloved historic Breton land!

And *Mont St. Michel*, what of thee?
Thou home of Norman chivalry!
Romantic "Wonder of the West,"
Rising from out the ocean's breast,
We gaze across thy silver sand,
On the blue coast of Breton land.

A peaceful calm o'er *Dol* doth reign,
Her antique streets, her sacred fane;
But here we may not bide, for we
Are hastening onwards to the sea,
And soon, alas! our little band
Must bid adieu to Breton land.

St. Malo's walls and bastions grey,
The greater and the lesser bay,
Grow faint and fainter to the view,
As cleaves our barque the waters blue.
Ah! when shall we behold thy strand
Once more, enchanting Breton land?

E. LEITH.



THE WHITE REDOUTE.

BY E. NESBIT.

THE Casino des Fleurs was ablaze with light. As you came up the hill, you could see through the orange trees and cypresses of its garden the flash and glitter of its many-coloured lamps, slung from bough to bough. Along the terraces and balconies gleamed rows of brilliant, tinted lights, and the soft mellow glow of shaded Chinese lanterns swung and flickered in the charmed April air.

Carriage after carriage stopped at the steps to set down its burden of cloaked and masked figures. Within, the rooms were already crowded, yet still more and more guests politely shouldered their way into the big hall, for it was the night of the White Redoute and all Cannes and half Nice and Monte Carlo were there.

"One has to go, you know," said a stout Englishman in a white Turkish dress trimmed with gold embroidery, "though I don't suppose it will be much fun."

His companion put his hands into the pockets of his silk breeches—he was dressed as a Breton peasant.

"One seems to be making an awful fool of one's self," he said, "but they tell me I must go, and Duval sent me in this dress. I suppose it's all right. What is a *redoute*, by the way?"

"A *redoute*, my dear Jameson," said the first speaker, "is a masked ball, always crowded, often rowdy; and the point of it is that you have to wear the colour chosen by the committee. This time it is white and gold. The *redoute* at Nice last week was scarlet. We looked like a sea of blood surging over the parterre of the theatre."

"Oh! well," said the other, "one must go through with it, I suppose. It will be something to tell them about at home."

And they passed on.

In the ball-room dancing had already begun. The shining floor was dotted with dainty figures in white and gold which looked as if they had just stepped off some gigantic Twelfth cake. Many were in fancy dresses, though the long loose disguising folds of the domino hid the figure of many. All were masked.

The somewhat Chinese character of the interior decorations of the Casino des Fleurs added a quaint touch to the festal scene.

A young man dressed in the costume of an English cavalier stood dangling his white-feathered hat by the door. Below the golden love-locks a touch of shadow round the ear betrayed his complexion, and a long drooping black moustache marked strikingly that portion of a pale face which the black velvet mask left visible. The cut of

the clean shaven chin, the turn of the well-set head,—the very poise of the broad tall figure—cheated the mask and betrayed, at least to the eyes of every woman there, the fact that the cavalier was a handsome man. More than one pair of bright eyes had indeed glanced invitingly at him, more than one voice had murmured in passing: "*Monsieur ne danse donc pas ?*"

But the cavalier returned no answer to eye-signals or murmurs. It presently became evident to those lookers-on who were engaged in their proverbial occupation of seeing most of the game that he was waiting for someone.

A piquante little Bébé in short frock and pinafore and long hair flowing to the waist laughed as she passed him—

"Alas, alas! she won't keep her rendezvous. Monsieur might as well console himself sooner as later?"

Monsieur smiled indulgently and turned away.

A murmur of admiration ran along the double row of spectators who stood at the door watching the new arrivals. A woman was coming up the red-carpeted steps, on a man's arm of course. At the top of the steps she dropped her hand from his sleeve and walked forward alone.

Most of the wearers of fancy dress had taken full advantage of the charming licence that dress affords for the curtailing of petticoats, the abolition of sleeves and the minimisation of the bodice. This woman was clothed in long flowing white draperies, crinkly and sparkling as with dew or diamonds. Long ribbons of golden water-weed and great glistening white water-lilies formed a wreath that fell from her shoulder across her bosom and so down to the hem of her skirt. A wreath of starry white water flowers crowned her bright hair which fell in a ripple of golden splendour below her knees. A mass of tulle, soft and light as the foam of a waterfall, hid her neck and bosom. Her white arms gleamed and disappeared in a net of water-weeds that fell from each shoulder.

"Undine!" said voice after voice as she went by.

She went by the waiting cavalier with the black moustache, turned her head, smiled, and passed on. But that half turn was enough. He followed her.

"You witch!" he said, offering his arm as he gained her side.

"How is one to recognise you? At the red *redoute* last week you were a vivid vivandière. At the green and rose one you were a smiling shepherdess, and now when I expected the twinkle of white satin shoes and diamond buckles, there comes to me this lovely dream-lady. Thank Fate, the mask does not cover the mouth, or I should never have known you."

"Thank *me* rather," she said. "Would you have known me if I hadn't been at the pains to smile your way?"

"No," he answered frankly, "at least, not at once. This crowd is so bewildering, so many little black masks, so many pretty red mouths,

so many small white dresses, one's brain whirls round and round to the music till one almost forgets one's own name."

"I have quite forgotten mine," she said, laughing, "so it's no use leading up to the request that I should spell it to you in cold blood. Do we dance?"

They danced. Many a clown, many a punch and peasant watched the cavalier enviously as he swung his partner round in the smooth step of the English waltz.

"Ma foi!" said a white domino condescendingly, "but these English dance not so badly!"

When the last notes of Santiago died away, she leaned heavily on his arm.

"I am tired," she said rather wearily, "let us rest; unless you have any other name on your programme for the next dance?"

"You know," he answered directly, "that I only came here to see you. I want to talk to you. You have never given me anything but dances—never your name, or a rose from your dress, or even leave to spend a moment with you except in the dancing-room. Give me something to-night. Give me an hour to talk to you in."

They passed through the crowd, by this time laughing, joking and enjoying itself in a light-hearted, irresponsible, child-like way that to an English crowd is, was, and ever will be, impossible; through the room with the green tables where the "little horses" had only just ceased to spin round to the tune of rising and falling fortune. He pushed back a bright embroidered curtain and opened the long window that led on to the balcony. There was no one there, for the air of April nights is chilly even in the Mediterranean, April which is like our June; and French folk have an unwholesome dread of fresh air at the best and sunniest of times.

They stepped out and he closed the window after them. The gardens lay stretched before them, bathed in moonlight. Down its aisles twinkled the little coloured glass lamps. In an angle of the balcony he set a chair for her, sat down beside her and spoke.

"I have thought of nothing but you ever since I saw you last, and I have made up my mind to tell you everything, and to ask you—but first I want to tell you in the plainest words, what you know already—that I love you, and I want you to tell me in your darling voice, what I should insult you if I doubted—that you love me."

Undine fluttered her fan nervously.

"Three meetings at public dances, monsieur," she said with a light laugh that had a little discord in it.

"Oh! don't trifle with me any more," he broke in. "This is not play now; it is deadly earnest. I love you. I am going to show you my whole life, my whole heart. Have you nothing to say, nothing real? I can't speak unless you tell me you love me."

She held out her hand, from which she had taken the white glove, and clasped his brown fingers with a strong, soft pressure.

"Speak," she said.

"When first I met you," he began, "yes, at the very first step we took together, after that Englishman introduced me to you, I think I must have loved you; though I thought, yes, I honestly thought, it was only because you were English, and our steps suited, that I wanted to dance all the other dances with you."

"You did dance a good many," she murmured softly.

"Yes, and at the end of the evening I felt that there was no one in Nice, or in the whole of France that I should ever care to dance with again. Then you told me that you were going to the red *redoute*, and I went, and we danced together again, and we talked. And after that evening I felt that there was no one like you to be a comrade and a companion, and that my life would be filled, completely filled if I had you for my friend."

"And to-night?" she asked, as he paused.

"And to-night," he answered, speaking fast and turning his head away to look over the moonlit garden, "to-night, directly you came into the room, and turned and smiled at me, I knew that I loved you; and when we waltzed together, I knew that you loved me, and that we must say 'good-bye' to-night, and never see each other again."

She drew a short, startled breath.

"And why?"

"That is what I am going to tell you. If I were free, I should now be asking you to be my wife."

She turned her face to him.

"You would ask *me*, me, a strange woman whom you have only met amusing herself at not too strictly respectable public dances, a woman whose very name you don't know, whose past you are ignorant of, you would ask *me* to be your wife!"

"I would," he said. "Heaven knows with what a humble heart hoping for a good answer. But I am not free. I am married."

"And do you love your wife?" she asked quickly.

"No," he answered, "I don't love my wife. Be patient with me and let me tell you the whole miserable story. Oh, yes, the whole story, no concealments," he added half to himself. "When I was a young man, I was a fool. I got into debt. I gambled. I lost"—his voice trembled and he set his teeth hard. "I gambled and lost," he went on in a firmer voice, "and I forged the name of a man in whose office I was, to pay my debts. I meant to pay it back if I won on the next race. It was Ascot. I could not pay the money back. My employer behaved admirably. He accepted the signature, told me that he knew my secret, and allowed me to repay the sum out of my salary. That cured me of gambling, once and for all. When I came into the baronetcy and the estates, of course I left his office, and for some years I saw nothing of him. But I heard with regret that his firm had failed, and that he himself was living in what I feared was pinched retirement, no one knew where. Two years ago

he sent for me. He was living at Boulogne. When I reached him he was dying, and when I saw him lying there in that poor room, and remembered that, but for him, I should have been a branded man, cut off from my fellows, an outcast from any society that I could ever have cared for, a sort of rush of gratitude came over me. I felt that there was nothing that I would not do for him in that hour.

"What is it you want?" I asked. "Believe me you can count on me for everything."

"Take care of my daughter," he said. "I leave her to you."

"She was at the other side of the bed in a shabby grey gown, her eyes red with weeping."

"Very plain, I suppose?" put in Undine.

He frowned a little.

"It wasn't her fault that she looked like that," he said; "she had been crying till she could hardly see out of her eyes. 'But what am I to do with your daughter?' I asked, and I saw in a minute what a position hers would be as the ward of a young unmarried man. I cared for no one else. I was a fool, but at that minute nothing seemed to me to matter except that he should die with a mind at rest. So I said: 'If your daughter will marry me, I will make her a good husband. I will take every care of her.'"

"What did the girl say?" asked Undine.

"She said 'No,' with oblivious and unflattering sincerity," he answered, with a hard laugh. "But the old man raised himself in bed and said: 'Celia, this is a chance that will never come to you again. This is a good man'—God bless him for saying that—'and if you marry him I shall die easy and rest in my grave. Let me rest in my grave, Celia, and know that you are well-cared for.' So we were married and the next day he died."

"And what did you do? Did you take your wife home? Was that what you did?"

"No, that's what I ought to have done. She would not see me after her father's death, and I left her there while I went home to make arrangements for her reception at Thetford Court. My mother had to be prepared and I knew that no letter could do it. When I came back she was gone. She had left me a letter—here it is. I have never seen her since."

Undine took the letter and spread it out with hands that trembled a little. It ran thus—

"DEAR SIR ROBERT THETFORD,—Your goodness and generosity in marrying me to please my poor father have conferred an obligation on me that I can never forget. The least return I can make to you is to leave you all the freedom our unfortunate situation permits. Our marriage, it will comfort you to remember—for I saw in your eyes how you detested me—shall be a marriage only in name. I have a

little money—quite enough to live on. Forget me and forgive me, if you can, for having brought this trouble into your life.

“CELIA.”

“What a stupid girl!” said Undine.

“Not at all,” Thetford answered. “I don’t see what else she could have done. I must have let her see—blundering fool that I was!—how I loathed the idea of being married to anybody. However, there she is wandering about the world somewhere, poor child! and if she had waited, we might have grown fond of each other. But now I have seen you, there’s an end to any chance of that. It is you I love, and always shall love.”

“Have you not heard from her again?”

“Yes, she writes to me every three months, and says she is doing well,” Thetford answered. “Oh, what a ghastly farce life is! Here am I tied to her. She does not want me. And I want you; and all the tune of life rings backwards.”

She had taken his hand in hers again. Presently she lifted it softly to the lips that showed under the black mask.

“The old man was right,” she said; “you are very good.”

“And is that all you have to say? Oh! give me some word of pity, some word of comfort.”

“What can I say or do?”

“You can say, ‘Good-bye, and God bless you!’ You can take off your mask and let me just this once see your dear face. Tell me your name, and tell me you forgive me for having loved you and for having told you so.”

“Take off your mask first,” she said. He broke the string and it fell beside him on the floor.

“Forgive me,” she said, “for having made you love me.”

“I have nothing to forgive,” he answered. “Show me your face before we say ‘good-bye’ for ever.”

She had loosened the mask and was holding it in its place with her hand.

“Why should we say ‘Good-bye?’”

He looked at her doubtfully. “Why? Have I not told you why?”

She spoke sharply, resolutely. “I have made it the business of my life to see you, to talk with you, to make you love me, because I love you. I have made you love me, so that we need never part again. You love the masked lady. Will it kill your love to know,” she asked as she dropped the mask on her knee, “that the masked lady is your wife?”

* * * * *

Inside the music beat and throbbed and swelled, but out in the balcony the silence of Paradise had stooped and enfolded them.

VANITAS VANITATIS.

SHE was standing at the gate leading into the big field, her arms crossed on the topmost bar, her chin resting on her interlaced hands, and her eyes roaming over the flat expanse of rich green which stretched away in monotonous planes of distance, until it met the purple line of bog which again faded into the dim blue outline of the Dublin mountains, lying cloud-like on the horizon line.

It was five o'clock, and the thick white evening mist was already rising from the rich pasture-land on which the sun had been shining all day. The cows, making their way slowly to the milking-sheds, waded knee-deep through the ghostly sea of steamy fog, snatching last morsels of the sweet aftergrass as they went, and moo-ing indignant protests as Billy, the herd's boy, hurried their lagging steps with shouts interspersed with adjurations of an uncomplimentary nature to the more dilatory.

It was a pastoral scene, not wanting in a beauty of its own, but Lavinia Farrell as she leaned over the gate could not be said to add another to its many picturesque details. Lavinia was not built on the lines of a heroine. She was gaunt-figured and heavy-featured, with pale freckled complexion, hair of an undeterminate straw colour, which even with St. Paul's authority it would be stretching a point to call "a glory;" and the eyes which now gazed vacantly at the approaching cattle, though good in size and shape, were wanting in depth of colour and expression. At the same time she possessed the undoubted charm of being suited to her surroundings, and in an Irish midland county, in a society of agriculturists, whose thoughts and conversation vibrated with the soothing monotony of an eight-day clock, from the hunting prospects in winter to the ravages of foot-and-mouth disease in summer, Lavinia, in her short-waisted, badly-cut coat, and with her appreciation of the good points of a "beast," was eminently in correspondence with her environment.

She roused herself at last, thrust her large bony hands deep down into the pockets of her jacket, and with a sigh turned from the steamy pasture-land, and strolled up the narrow gravel drive leading to her home. It did not enter into Lavinia's philosophy to ask herself why she indulged in such an unaccustomed expression of emotion. It has already been said that she was not built on the correct lines of a heroine. Doubtless had she been so she would have dissected that sigh with accuracy, labelling its first and secondary causes with the neatness of the analytical chemist, and would have stored away the specimens in the shelves of her memory until a recurrence of the phenomenon should make it advisable to take them down for the

purpose of comparison and readjustment. But the pleasure of such scientific self-criticism was denied to Lavinia. Her life had hitherto been so uniformly even and dull that a disturbing element, when it made itself felt, was so novel as to be incomprehensible, and far beyond her slow bovine mind to classify. As it was she was but vaguely conscious of its presence, and its only outward expression was the sigh already chronicled and a half-formulated wish that she could manage to get boots which did not always wrinkle across the toes.

This thought was uppermost as she scraped the thick pasty field mud off them on the iron scraper, slowly mounted the few steps leading to the hall-door, and paused for a moment in the little hall to make a mental calculation of how soon she could afford herself a new pair.

"Not till I sell the calf, anyway," she concluded, as she opened the dining-room door.

Afternoon tea at the Farrells' was not one of those delightful informal meals generally understood by the name. It was, as everything connected with Mrs. Farrell seemed involuntarily to become, heavy, solid, satisfying. The large round mahogany table, covered by an ordinary dining-room damask cloth, was laid as for breakfast, with places for each member of the family, and the only concession to modern frivolity was a plate of mixed biscuits with sugared tops, blushing pink at their own worldliness as they contrasted themselves with the staid respectability of the cottage-loaf which occupied the centre of the table.

As Lavinia entered her mother motioned her silently to her place, but her two sisters were not so reticent. Rebecca-Mary stopped in the act of helping herself to a particularly attractive biscuit to whisper something to Mina, reducing them both to such a helpless state of giggles that Lavinia's father, who with his paper propped up before him, was reading the news between gulps of hot tea and mouthfuls of bread and butter, looked up over his spectacles to inquire what the good joke was.

"Oh, nothing particular," tittered Rebecca-Mary. "We were only wondering what was the attraction kept Lavinia out so late this cold evening."

"I was down at the gate watching the cows being driven in," said Lavinia shortly. Her slow mind vaguely realised that the "girls" were holding her up to some kind of ridicule, but she failed to see the exact drift of the remark.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mina, with a touch of sub-acid in her tone. "I suppose, now, you were looking for a good subject for a photo. 'Tis a great pity the Barrys drove away so early, or maybe they might have been of great assistance to you."

George Farrell had relapsed into his newspaper, but the mention of the Barrys' name brought him up to the surface again.

"What's that about the Barrys?" he said, in his comfortable slow rolling brogue. "Well now, they may be thankful I happened to be down at the gate this morning. They ought to have had more sense than to be driving a flighty young bit of a mare with the threshing-machine always at work not more than a few perch from the roadside in one field or another. I declare to goodness I thought both of them would be sent to glory, and Miss Barry may think herself mighty lucky to have nothing worse than a sprained wrist and a broken shaft to complain of."

"Then, indeed, George," said his wife, brushing some crumbs from her expansive lap to a more unobtrusive position under the table, "I wasn't a bit too well pleased to see you bringing them up the avenue, and I with my old cap on, and the sitting-room all of a litter with the dress Mina was cutting out. It was all I could do to get everything pushed away in time before you brought them in on top of me—and then to get Lily oil and bandages, and to have the ducks cooked for luncheon, when I was counting on them for Sunday's dinner, and all for the Barrys, who never come to call more than once in a blue moon! I was just mad with you."

"Well, I could hardly leave them there sitting by the road-side while the trap was being patched," began George Farrell in self-defence, when Mina broke in:

"I don't know at all why the Barrys should give themselves such airs, I'm sure. Now to-day Miss Barry had on a dowdy old tweed dress, and what I remember well seeing on her in church a year ago, only she has had the trimmings altered; and as for Captain Barry, I see nothing to admire in him, for all he's an officer. Not half so pleasant as Captain Fagan! D'ye remember, Rebecca-Mary, the awful fun we had with him the last time the Militia was out?"

"Ah, indeed, I do, Mina; but no wonder *you* didn't find Captain Barry very entertaining, and for the matter of that neither did I, when he'd talk of nothing but photographs from the moment he laid eyes on Lavinia's camera over in the corner," said Rebecca-Mary with a toss of her head. "But I let him see what I thought of him nicely. 'Are you the photographer, Miss Farrell?' he says to me. 'No, indeed, Captain Barry,' I said quite sharp back; 'I wouldn't be bothered photographing—I'd rather be flirting.'" Rebecca-Mary bridled as she recalled her promptness of repartee. "He didn't say much to me after that, I can tell you; but I daresay now, Lavinia found him pleasant enough!"

A dull red flush crept over Lavinia's face at this sally, mounting up to the roots of her straw-coloured hair. As a rule, she had no objection, in fact looked upon it as a matter of course, that she should be made the butt of her sisters' witticisms—it amused them, and had no effect on her. But in some mysterious way this shaft found its way home, stinging her with a consciousness of its partial truth, and producing an unwonted sense of discomfort and annoyance. She

made a desperate effort to change the conversation, and turned to her father.

"The Herefordshire calf's improving greatly, father; Peter says she'll fetch a good price at the November fair, if I sell her there." But Rebecca-Mary was not to be baulked.

"Just listen to her," she said with a little scream of laughter, "listen to her pretending that it's calves she was thinking about when she was mooning below at the gate. Well, to think I should ever see Lavinia in love! and with Captain Barry, too! Did you ever hear such a thing!"

Lavinia cast about in her mind for a retort wherewith to silence her tormentor, but her powers of repartee were not equal to the occasion, and there is no knowing how much longer she would have had to endure Rebecca-Mary's airy badinage had not her father come unexpectedly to her rescue.

"Ah, give over teasing Lavinia," he said, as he passed his cup up the table to be replenished; "if you're jealous of her, you might have more sense than to show it. Anyhow, my head's addled with the nonsense you talk, and I'll be thankful to you if you'll stop clacking and let me read my paper in peace."

No one would have been more astonished than Cuthbert Barry at the innuendoes conveyed in the foregoing conversation, could he have heard them. He was eminently an easy-going good-natured man, possessing, to a degree which was almost a misfortune, the wish to be agreeable and the power of making himself so. When therefore fate, assisted by a threshing machine, had unexpectedly thrown him into the Farrells' company, he had instinctively exerted himself to overcome the difficulty of the situation, and had used his charm of manner to such good purpose and with such apparent ingenuousness that no one, excepting himself, realised that his interest in Lavinia's photographic successes and failures were only simulated for the sake of making a *mauvais quart d'heure* pass pleasantly. The photographs had been to him as a lifebelt to a drowning man; he had clutched at them as a means of escape from the overpowering directness of Rebecca-Mary's style of arch conversation; and once the strain of circumstances was relieved, Lavinia and her artistic efforts faded away from his memory, and formed themselves into a hazy background to the more amusing details of the Farrells' luncheon-party. He was scarcely to blame if his deferential, respectful manner and his skilfully chosen words of appreciation had roused in Lavinia a dim and unwonted feeling of self-respect, mingled with gratitude which the subsequent jests of her sisters quickened into life and definiteness, giving her glimpses of possibilities which had never before entered into the range of her mental vision.

These might have passed away as lightly as they had come, only that Lavinia's ill-fortune once more threw Cuthbert in her way.

He was riding home after an early morning's cub-hunting, whistling

softly to himself, and eyeing with keen artistic pleasure the fiery autumn tints of the beeches mingling with the delicate yellow of the lime-trees, whose branches seemed hung with large golden guineas dropping at each breath of morning air noiselessly to the ground. Suddenly the peacefulness of the scene was jarred by the growling and yapping of two dogs evidently engaged in mortal combat. Cuthbert's artistic reverie was shattered, and as he rounded a turn in the lane, he came upon a fox-terrier and a red-haired dog of uncertain pedigree rolling in the heaps of yellow leaves and apparently bent on mutual destruction.

Cowering up against the hedge, with her fingers in her ears, was Miss Mina Farrell, while Lavinia was making gallant but ineffectual attempts to seize one of the dogs by the tail. Cuthbert took in the situation at a glance, and jumping down from his horse, struck the dog which first came uppermost over the ribs with his hunting crop, and at the same time caught the fox-terrier by his apology for a tail, and dragged the combatants apart. A second blow of the crop sent the red-haired dog yelping off through a convenient gap in the hedge, and Lavinia then had time to recognise and thank him for his assistance.

Rebecca-Mary too came forward from her place of safety and overwhelmed him with voluble gratitude.

"'Tis very kind of you indeed, Captain Barry, to come to our help ! Indeed I'm always telling Lavinia that she shouldn't bring Jack out for walks, without we have a gentleman with us, for as sure as we meet another dog, Jack is certain to fight him ; and I assure you, I'm half-dead with fright this minute, Captain Barry."

Cuthbert smiled vaguely in answer, and looked at Lavinia, who was wiping away some drops of blood from her wrist.

"I hope you're not bitten, Miss Farrell?" he asked with sudden interest. "I was afraid you would be when I saw you trying to catch that cur by the tail."

"Oh ! it's nothing," said Lavinia hurriedly and colouring scarlet ; "only a little bit of a scratch."

"But, excuse me, you ought to be careful even of a scratch where a dog is concerned," Cuthbert said. "May I see it?" taking her hand as he spoke, and looking at it closely. "Ah ! I am glad to see it is not much, but if I were you, I should wash it at once, just as a preventative, you know—it's better to be sure than sorry."

Lavinia thought her hand had never looked so red and bony as it did as it lay in his. She was glad when he let it go again and turned to mount his horse.

"Good-bye," he said, as he gathered up his reins, "or, rather *au revoir* ! I shall see you at our dance on Wednesday, shall I not?"

The question was addressed to Lavinia, and he noticed a look of confusion on her face as she answered in her abrupt, short way :

"I'm not going ; the girls and my mother are."

"Not coming? Why not? Don't you care about dancing?"

"It's not that," said Lavinia; "but they thought—we thought—you would not care to have so many of us."

"Not care!" repeated Cuthbert, bending down towards her over his horse's neck, and mentally praying for forgiveness for the falsehood. "Why, we should be very much disappointed if you didn't all come; the more the merrier. I hope you will think better of it, and change your mind."

The very insincerity of his appeal made him throw an unnecessary earnestness into his voice. Lavinia, however, detected no false ring. A quick flood of colour rushed to her cheeks.

"I should like to go," she said, not venturing to meet his eyes.

"Very well, then that's settled," he said lightly. "Remember, I shall expect to see you on Wednesday night. Good-bye again."

He lifted his hat, and in a few moments was out of sight.

"Well! upon my word, Lavinia," exclaimed Rebecca-Mary, "you might have had more sense than to say what you did!"

"Why, what else could I say?" retorted Lavinia.

"What else could *he* say, you mean," answered her sister; "the way you put it, he was bound to ask you to go. And what are you going to do for a dress, I should like to know? You'd disgrace us all if you went in your old rag of a pink thing."

"Never you mind," said Lavinia roughly. "I'll have a dress, never you fear!"

The night of the Barrys' ball, Lavinia stood in her room, looking down at herself in wonderment. Her small looking-glass was not large enough to reflect the whole of her glory at a time, but she had overcome this difficulty by looking at herself in detachments; sitting down first of all to admire the fringe which she had with great trouble curled over her forehead; then rising to her feet so as to fully see the beauties of her white satin bodice; and lastly standing upon a chair to get the effect of her crisp little skirts, at the imminent risk of being set on fire by the two candles which cast a flickering, inadequate light on the dressing-table. Lavinia hardly recognised herself in these fragmentary visions of splendour, and only that the certainty of her own identity was brought home to her by the tightness of her new satin shoes, would have been inclined to exclaim with the old woman of nursery rhyme celebrity: "O dear a mercy, this is none o' I!"

But there was no time now to waste on metaphysical speculations of the kind. She could hear Mina and Rebecca-Mary rustling downstairs and calling to Biddy for their cloaks and wraps. She unlocked the little mahogany box, to take out the garnet brooch which was her one and only piece of jewelry. But there was a folded slip of paper in the box as well, and as she picked up the brooch, her eyes fell upon it, not without a momentary pang of regret. In spite of her

haste she took it out and unfolded it. It was a very ordinary document. Merely a receipt in the usual shopkeeper's hieroglyphs from Peter Robinson, Oxford Street, London: "To one ball costume," £6 6s." But to Lavinia it meant a great deal. It represented many searchings of heart on her own part, many wordy battles with Peter Growney the herd, who with tears in his eyes had besought her not to lose a certain two pounds at the very least by selling the Herefordshire calf before the November fair. But Lavinia, with the glamour of Cuthbert Barry's manner still over her, had been reckless. She could not go to the ball without a new dress, a dress worthy of the occasion, and that dress could only be obtained at the sacrifice of the calf; so prudence and Peter Growney's councils were cast to the winds, and the whole of Lavinia's capital was now represented by that receipted bill and the evanescent glory of her ball-dress.

Lavinia unfolded it and replaced it in the box with a sigh from the practical, and a blush from the romantic side of her nature.

"I'm coming," she called in answer to screams from her sisters in the hall; and wrapping a white knitted shawl round her shoulders she ran downstairs.

"My gracious! Lavinia! what a swell you are," exclaimed Mina, enviously conscious that her own costume had already borne the brunt of two Militia balls, and was not in its *première jeunesse*. "Take off your shawl now, and let us have a look at the body."

"Ah! what's the use, girls," expostulated Mrs. Farrell; "sure you'll see it well enough when we get there, and Kiernan's car's been at the door this half-hour already. We'll be most awfully late as it is."

"Goodness, mamma! we're not asked till ten, and it's only a quarter after nine now," said Mina.

"But it will take us a good hour to drive there, and I wouldn't for anything offend Lady Barry by being unpunctual," replied Mrs. Farrell, putting a stop to all further argument by girding up the skirts of her crimson velveteen to a height more practical than becoming, and leading the way down the steps to where Kiernan's car was patiently awaiting them.

Kiernan's car was the only covered vehicle which could be hired for many miles round. It was of a species which though still flourishing in the southern, has almost disappeared from the midland counties of Ireland. The particular one owned by Mr. Kiernan, and hired this evening by the Farrells, was an exceptional survival, but could hardly be called the survival of the fittest. In appearance it resembled a cut-down prison or penitentiary van on two wheels. The door at the back by which intending passengers entered was provided with a small window, the only means of ventilation, unless we take into account some large cracks in the front windows, which had been temporarily and inefficiently mended with a couple of Bass & Co.'s adhesive beer labels.

The floor was thickly strewn with straw, the damp musty smell of

which mingled in a friendly and confiding way with that of stale tobacco, a reminiscence of the last funeral or wedding-party at which the car had been employed.

It was a tight fit for the four ladies, but they were at last packed in, and the door was shut upon them by George Farrell, who breathed a prayer of thankfulness that the absolute impossibility of the vehicle containing another person saved him from the drive of six miles and the subsequent festivities.

It cannot be said that Lavinia enjoyed the drive. It was her first ball, and her ideas on the etiquette required on such an occasion were vague in the extreme. She had time during the hour of swaying and jolting over rutty roads to pass through many stages of nervousness, and as Kiernan's car drew up at the Barrys' door, she had reached the point of wishing that she might go home, or at any rate be left in the seclusion of the car until the moment came for guests to depart. Something of this feeling she ventured to express to Rebecca-Mary, next whom she was sitting; but the idea was received with a scornful scream of laughter.

"Go home! and you invited specially by Captain Barry! and your brand new dress and all! Don't be a fool, Lavinia! Anyhow, you're next the door, and you must just get out, and let us go into the house, whatever you mean to do yourself afterwards."

Lavinia obeyed meekly, and followed her more courageous sister to the ladies' dressing-room, which with its long pier glass, and two attendants in frilled aprons oppressed her with an overwhelming sense of inferiority, and incongruity with her surroundings.

A tall girl in a yellow dress, with rippled hair, the colour of a ripe chestnut, and a supple graceful figure, moved away from the glass as the Farrells entered, and escorted by a portly grey-haired mother, whose black velvet bodice twinkled with diamond brooches, fluttered from the room. Lavinia followed her with admiring eyes, and then turned to the glass.

Was it the contrast of her own solid proportions with those of the girl last reflected by it, or was the glass one of those malevolent mirrors which act the part of the too candid friend, telling nothing but unpleasant truths? Lavinia could not put it into words, but certainly her heart within her cried, "Ichabod!" The glory was departed from the costume which she had so lately looked at in her own room with pride and satisfaction. Kiernan's car had done much to rob her skirts of their first fresh crispness. Her waist looked clumsy, and her arms and neck glowed scarlet, in contrast to the shining white satin bodice. Her carefully curled fringe had suffered from the night air, and had become rebelliously straight here and there; and the white gloves into which her hands had with difficulty been thrust, had burst their upper buttons and showed an alarming tendency to do likewise across the knuckles.

"Now, Lavinia, if you're quite done admiring your grandeur, I'll

trouble you to let me see how my dress looks after the squashing you gave it coming along in the car."

Rebecca-Mary's sharp voice woke Lavinia from the painful trance into which she had fallen, and she moved aside to make room for her sister, who with none of Lavinia's sense of failure, shook out her pink skirts, pulled out the crushed lace on her bodice and pinned her bunch of flowers in more securely.

After the dreadful ordeal of shaking hands with her hostess was over, Lavinia followed her mother up the ball-room, as closely as the long train of the crimson velveteen would allow her, and when at last Mrs. Farrell came to a convenient anchorage in an arm-chair, Lavinia stood beside her leaning against the wall, and feeling as though she had suddenly become possessed of more arms and hands than she knew what to do with.

The violin and double bass were tuning up with groans and rasping scrawks, and the pianist was doing his best to prevent them from arriving at any sort of unanimity by playing a series of brilliant running passages and arpeggios, either to exercise his fingers preparatory to his night's work, or to impress such of the guests as had arrived with a sense of his absolute command of his instrument. There were not as yet many people in the room, and the few there were, were not among Lavinia's acquaintances, so that she was able to take in and admire in a bewildered way the brilliant lights and the profusion of flowers, and to wonder how anyone was going to dance safely on a floor polished to such a degree that even to walk across it was a difficulty.

As her eye wandered round, it fell on a group at the farther end of the room. Close to an open doorway draped with heavy portières, stood the girl Lavinia had noticed in the dressing-room, and beside her, looking down at her, programme in hand, was Cuthbert Barry. Something she said amused him, for he laughed, and beckoned to his sister, who, with a little anxious pucker between her eyebrows, was trying to find something pleasant to say to the over-punctual guests who were scattered here and there on the sofas and chairs ranged round the sides of the room. Miss Barry moved over to her brother, and laid her hand on his arm, and Lavinia saw him cast a hasty glance across the room and shake his head. At this moment the double bass and violin suddenly ceased from troubling, and the piano was for an instant at rest, and in the comparative stillness Lavinia thought she heard Miss Barry say in a rather annoyed voice :

"Well, as you won't, I suppose I must."

She saw Cuthbert shrug his shoulders, and return to his interrupted conversation, while his sister sailed across the open space of polished floor and stopped beside Mrs. Farrell's arm-chair.

"So glad to see you," she said, with polite emprossement ; "you are very courageous people to face the long drive. Have you had any tea, Mrs. Farrell? Our gentlemen are all very fashionably late,

but if you will allow me to escort you, I shall be delighted to get you some."

"Oh, don't trouble yourself, Miss Barry," responded Mrs. Farrell, her face expanding into a capacious smile. "I don't want anything to drink yet awhile—we're only just after our tea ourselves."

Miss Barry swallowed with difficulty her inclination to laugh.

"Quite sure?" she questioned; "it would be no trouble, I assure you. Well, then I must go and tell the band to begin. It is quite time to start the real business of the evening, don't you think so?" and with a friendly nod, she moved off. She soon returned, however, bearing in her wake her school-boy brother Bob, whom she had ruthlessly reft from a coign of vantage behind the double-bass, where he had ensconced himself, hoping thus to escape his sister's eye and commands to duty.

"Miss Farrell," she said, stopping opposite Lavinia, "may I introduce my brother."

Lavinia's face assumed a brighter shade of scarlet, and she half put out her hand, and then hastily withdrew it, as Bob showed no sign of wishing to take it, but bowed stiffly and muttered something about "the pleasure of a dance," and taking Lavinia's silence for consent, continued: "May I have number ten, if you have it to spare?" then, hardly waiting to hear her answer, turned on his heel, and fled precipitately.

The room was gradually filling, and Rebecca-Mary and Mina, who at first had gazed rather blankly at unknown faces, and had made mental calculations of a depressing nature as to their chances of partners, brightened visibly, as among the later arrivals they espied several former swains of Militia Ball memory, whom they looked upon as a sure and certain prey. Nor were they mistaken, and Lavinia was glad to see them borne off by their faithful cavaliers, as she was thereby enabled to sink into a seat beside her mother, where she felt more comfortably unobtrusive than when standing.

The dances went on, and Lavinia's head grew dizzy as couple after couple swept by her, displaying their steps in every variety of style; for a country ball brings to the surface all sorts and conditions of steps, descending from the smooth modern glide, through various compromises to the plain unvarnished energy of the *deux temps*. But Lavinia was not critical. She did not possess even the small amount of knowledge necessary to being so, and she was only filled with a dazzled amazement, under which lurked a half formed wish that Captain Barry would speak to her.

Unconsciously, she singled him out of the revolving crowd, and watched him as he moved round in slow rhythmical circles, his partner's dress often brushing her foot as she passed. But it was not till after the seventh or eighth dance that her wish was realised. The music had ceased temporarily, and Cuthbert was filing out of the room with the rest of the crowd, his partner, the girl in yellow, on his arm,

when a block in the doorway brought him to a stand-still exactly in front of the Farrells. He rose to the emergency, and after greeting Mrs. Farrell, he turned to Lavinia.

"I am so glad you changed your mind and came after all, Miss Farrell," he said. "Can you give me a dance? number ten?"

"I'm sorry, I'm engaged for that one, Captain Barry," said Lavinia stammeringly.

"Really, that is too bad! I'm afraid I'm booked right through, except for that one—it serves me right though for coming so late. I hope I may have better luck another time." Then turning to his partner: "I think we shall be able to force a passage now—shall we try?"

Mrs. Farrell looked after their retreating figures.

"Well, I suppose I'm not up to grand society ways, but 'pon me word, in my day balls were more lively things than this. You wouldn't see well-dressed girls like you, Lavinia, sitting stuck up against the wall all night long, with no one to ask them to dance."

"Sure I don't know anyone here," said Lavinia humbly.

"Well, that's true," assented Mrs. Farrell, nodding her head. "And I'm told introducing is all out of fashion. It's a queer thing," she continued, with a pride chastened by the extreme dulness of her high position, "it's a queer thing, but I don't see a soul I know to speak to, and mighty few I know even by sight. I wonder now where's Rebecca-Mary and Mina?"

"They're with the officers. I saw them go out through that door a while ago," said Lavinia, choking down a yawn.

"Ah, well, leave them so," ejaculated Mrs. Farrell, with a placid smile of motherly satisfaction which changed to a look of lively interest when she perceived that after a few moments' consultation with Miss Barry the pianist hung out the announcement "First Supper Extra" over the corner of the piano and struck up a noisy polka. When some little time later Cuthbert Barry came and bore her off to the supper room, the culminating point of her satisfaction was reached, and in her elation she gave but little thought to Lavinia left stranded and alone.

It had been bad enough for Lavinia before, but now that she was deserted by her mother she gathered all her courage together, and as the music ended she stood up, and mingling with the throng of dancers, passed unnoticed out of the ball-room into the cool hall filled with the scent of datura and cytisus which came in great wafts of perfume through the open glass doors of the conservatory at the far end.

Lavinia's head ached from the heat and glare of the ball-room, and the coolness and semi-darkness of the dimly-lighted conservatory offered just the haven of rest she was longing for. She slipped quietly in, and walking to the far end, found two artfully-disposed basket chairs under the shadow of palms and some tall tree ferns. She sank into one of them with a little groan of fatigue, and throwing back her

head among the cushions closed her hot eyelids. Several couples, intent on securing a quiet corner, seeing the glimmer of her white dress, retired hastily with some irritation at having been forestalled, but Lavinia neither heard nor saw them. She was conscious of nothing except the relief of a momentary escape from the dazzle of the lights, the din of the dance music, and the never-ending gyrations of the dancers. Every now and then she caught a distant note, but it did not interfere with the soothing splash of the little fountain in the centre of the conservatory and the rustle of the wind in the trees outside. She could not have told how long she had been there lying with closed eyes, when the stillness was broken by two voices, one of which struck her with a sudden spasm of recognition. She could hear the creak of the basket chairs at the other side of a leafy screen of creepers and large tropical plants as the new-comers seated themselves. Then Cuthbert Barry's voice:

"Well, no one can say I haven't done my duty like a man," he began. "I've seen that old lady through a supper which, if it doesn't kill her, ought to last her the rest of her natural life. My word, how she did put away the lobster salad!"

"Which particular old lady?" asked a girl's voice, with a little laugh.

"That woman in red velvet with the enormous mosaic brooch. Still, after all, my task was a light one compared with what is before poor Bob. He has to dance with the daughter, that girl I asked for number ten."

"Ah, to be sure! I remember at the time thinking you looked rather relieved when she said she was engaged."

"Oh! I had carefully prepared my escape, I can tell you. I knew she was engaged to Bob for that dance."

"It was rather a cheap civility then." There was a certain tone of reproof in the girl's voice.

"Don't be severe on me," apologised Cuthbert, and Lavinia, listening now with painful interest, could easily picture to herself the look which accompanied the words. "Really, they are quite impossible people. They did us a good turn the other day when Moll and I came to grief in the trap near their house, and we asked them here as a return civility. I have danced with one of the girls, and have taken the old mother down to supper, but really you could see for yourself that that girl—— Why, it would want Hercules himself to drag her round!"

"Ah, poor thing!" There was a note of genuine sympathy which went straight to Lavinia's heart. "Do you know I think 'impossible people' as you call them, always attract me in a curious sort of way. Several times this evening as I looked across the room and saw that poor plain girl sitting out dance after dance and not opening her lips even to her mother, I wished I were a man that I might go and ask her for a dance. Probably she has been looking forward to this ball

with the greatest delight ever since she got her invitation, and unless she is differently made from any other girl, it must have been one vast disappointment."

"I never thought of it in that light," said Cuthbert, humbly. "But I say, look here, Helen, I didn't bring you here to talk of the Farrells; there was something quite different I wanted to tell you." He hesitated and cleared his throat nervously, and there was a shakiness in his voice as he went on: "You are such a good hand at lecturing me, won't you take me in hand altogether? Don't say 'No' before you hear me out," he went on hurriedly, as though fearing to be interrupted. "Ever since I was quite a little chap——"

But here Lavinia's slumbering sense of honour suddenly awoke to the fact that she was listening to a conversation she had no right to hear, and stuffing her fingers into her ears, she buried her face in her knees.

It was long before she ventured to stir.

When at last she raised her head, there was no sound in the conservatory but the never-tiring splash of the fountain. Her head throbbed painfully, and it was with difficulty she kept the tears from starting to her eyes, for the few sympathetic words which the unseen girl had spoken, had shown her the pathos of her own position more clearly than she could have imagined it for herself. She rose stiffly from her seat, and mechanically found her way back into the hall. It was now deserted; a cotillon was going on in the dancing-room, and even those who were not actually dancing were looking on. Except that she found herself a seat and remained there until discovered later on by her mother and sisters, she could remember nothing distinctly of the rest of the evening. It was a confused blur of music and moving figures with whom she seemed to have no connection. Her slow mind had gone through a series of emotions, whose very unusualness was confusing. To attempt to disentangle them was not within the scope of her mental powers, and she was too humble by nature, and her long course of home-snubbing, to feel anger against anyone. There was nothing left her but the dull consciousness that she had been a fool. Peter Growney had told her as much when he had brought her the price of the Herefordshire calf, "and 'deed," thought poor Lavinia, "he said no more than the truth."

This was the depressing "motif" which rang its changes through her tired brain as she leaned back in the corner of Kiernan's car on the way home and watched with a sort of dull fascination the be-feathered and spangled cap, which had been the crowning glory of Mrs. Farrell's costume, assuming little by little a rakish slew over one ear as Mrs. Farrell nodded in stertorous slumber to the swaying of the vehicle, and finally freeing itself from the last restraining hair-pin, leaping like Marcus Curtius into the black abysses below.

It had not occurred to Biddy to tidy the bedrooms at such an

abnormal hour as nine o'clock in the evening, so that when Lavinia entered hers, there was still the general litter of her preparations for the ball lying about ; her day dress hanging over the back of a chair where she had flung it in her haste and excitement, the packet of hairpins open on the table, and the little mahogany jewel-box as she had left it, with the corner of Peter Robinson's receipt peeping out at one side.

The chilly grey morning light was forcing its way through the cracks of the shutters making everything in the room look wan and melancholy. Lavinia, as she put her flickering candle down on her dressing-table, looked round her and shuddered. Even to her unimaginative mind the room was haunted by the ghost of the poor little romance that had brightened her dull life for the space of a few days, and as she smoothed out the crumpled frills of her little skirt and laid it tenderly on the shelf of her press, beside the white satin bodice, she felt as a mother might who shuts away from her sight the little pair of shoes or the holland pinafore which speak to her too plainly of past hopes, present loss, and a blank and dreary future.

ETHEL PENROSE.

MONKSHOOD.

On steep hillside where sleeps untrodden snow,
Where frozen blasts through Alpine forests blow—

In wild waste places blooms the poison-flower :

Fair poison-flower ! within whose venom breath

Lurk sickly scents of ill and seeds of death,

But still His gift Whose signs are peace and power.

Wafted afar, the purple glories fall

By lowly cottage path and crumbling wall,

Hiding in hooded depths the means to bless ;

Secrets to bid the fluttering heart be still,

Strength to subdue a thousand forms of ill,

Soft might to soothe like tender hand's caress.

The quivering lip, the hot brow's fever pain,

The maddening ache of racking limbs and brain,

Owe to the deadly draught a magic peace.

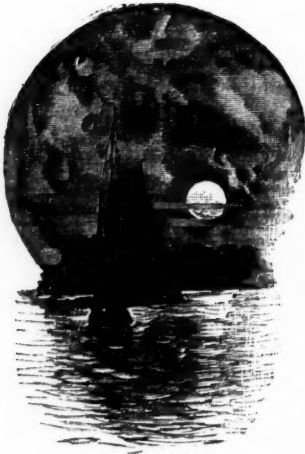
By science ruled, broad Earth's mysterious harms

Yield up their spells—life's knowledge death disarms,

And Nature's self can bid her terrors cease.

C. E. MEETKERKE.

A LEATHER POCKET-BOOK.



I PICKED it up on the beach at Hayling Island, or rather I unearthed it from a huge mass of stones with the assistance of my dog, who, lying with his nose over the spot, had commenced sniffing and whining and scraping, until I was forced to help him, merely out of impatience to be rid of him.

But that was years ago, when Hayling Island was a delightful little Robinson Crusoe haunt, where there was no accommodation for the tripper or family holiday-maker, and where there was only connection with the mainland and the quaint, little sleepy town of Havant by a shaky old bridge built for waggons and market-carts.

Now I am told it is fast becoming a fashionable watering-spot, with a fine railway bridge, and crowds of lodging-houses and summer residences, and, I suppose, excellent tennis-courts, and golf-links on the wild bit of broad common that bordered the sea. No! I have no wish to visit Hayling Island again. I would rather guard the memory of its utter loneliness and rugged beauty; its simple fisher-folk with their eventful lives and smuggling experiences, and the beautiful children that gave you the sweetness of the place in their voluntary caresses and pretty appreciations of your "painting shows."

I have just read a startling description of the Sardinian town of Salti (situated forty miles from Buddesso), which is said to contain 1200 inhabitants, and which has "no town council, no police, no clergyman, no physician, no post office, no school, no registrar's office. Once a year all the children born during the year are taken to Buddesso in block and there baptised. The dead are buried in the most primitive manner and without any trace of religious rites. Marriages are conducted on the same system, without any formality or ceremony, and are declared later on to the registrar or parish priest. Vaccination and medicines are only known from hearsay. The children grow up without schooling or instruction of any kind." And I am startled at the description, for I might have used every word of it with scarcely a whisper of exaggeration for my little

island in the days when Don and I unearthed the old leather pocket-book.

* * * * *

There was no date on the fly-leaf, but on the closely-written pages the ink must have dried long ago. And there was no name, no indication anywhere of whom the writer was. But in the passionate, broken story, his personality stands out with living force. It is true the circumstances of the finding of it, the romantic spot, and my own loneliness, may have cast a glamour over the story, and for me alone it may be of impressive worth. Still, I will risk all that rather than withhold it from one person who shall be interested in its perusal.

To-day is the anniversary of our cruel parting, six years ago, on this very spot, where the sand sweeps over the yellow furze, and the bracken is going red. I see you standing in your blue gown, your hair blowing about your sunburnt face, and your hand shading your eyes. Those eyes, Eileen! on whom are they shining now? Is there, can there be just one far-away look in them that meets mine across the seas that divide us? Those eyes! Who has the right to look into their lovely depths and read your soul—my soul? It *cannot* be another's, Eileen! What was there left to give another? "A woman may love a dozen times a dozen loves," you told me, with your brave hands locked in mine, "and she may be faithful to the memory of them all, but she only loves with the fire of her being *once*, and *one man*." And I drew your hands round my neck and kissed the words on your lips madly, passionately. Oh! we were terribly happy, my darling, then, and in the days that followed. And all those misgivings lest I had wronged you in loving you, that would torment me and make me plead with you again and again to leave me, not to risk your future with mine, how you laughed them away with pretty menaces for my want of trust in the power of love. And yet it was love that betrayed us after all!

I believe there is no suspicion in a woman's nature; it is natural to her to trust every man she meets, until the man shall say: "Do you trust me?" I never asked you that, thank God! I had come among you all a perfect stranger, but the good-hearted people sent their children to the little school I started. Your uncle, with a sailor's hospitality, received me into his house without a question; but *you* I told simply from the first, "I am an escaped convict!" and a bright flash of intelligence shot from your eyes.

"And an innocent man," you said. "I will keep your secret."

The light from the peat fire broke over your face as you spoke, and showed me the strength and beauty of its features. Oh, love, it didn't take us very long after that to know each other well. My secret and its history drew from you in return the sad story of your life—the struggles, the hardships—and then that sweet confession that came with a laugh instead of a blush, "and I've never had a

sweetheart like the other girls to make things easy." A man can't read between the lines of delicate matter with a woman's quick intuition, and I looked on your perfect form and face with an incredulous smile. "Oh!" you said quickly, "of course there have been men to admire one, and all that, but a lover means a receiver as well as a giver of love, and I've no love for anybody but uncle that I know of."

"She don't cotton to the lads here," he told me one day; "they think her a bit stuck-up, but they don't know her mother was an Irish lady, and gave the lass her pretty manners and the stock of learning she has, and that's just what attracts her to you; you talk about books and theories, and she'll sit for hours when you've gone meditating on what you've said, or reading those heavy volumes; but I don't see why you should teach out of hours."

As if that wasn't the one bit of rest in the dreary day! That, and the meetings on the beach in the twilight, or the moonlight rows on the quiet waters. But all they came after, after that day, when I paused in reading you Goethe's 'Tasso' (we had found it among your mother's few books):

"I honoured him, and could not choose but love him,
For that with him my life was life indeed,
Filled with a joy I never knew before,"

and looked up, for you had turned your head away, and I saw the heaving of your bosom, and the bright red colour flushing your throat and cheek.

"Eileen!" I cried, and you sprang up and stood before me.

"Yes, yes!" you sobbed. "I love you with all my life, oh! love me too, love me too!" I was not strong in that moment; I was not strong to tell you, I could give you *nothing*, nothing beyond myself; that I could only risk an escape to foreign lands when the chance came; that I might be arrested any day. No! I was only strong in my hot, passionate love that folded you to my breast, and would not let you go. I could only warn you afterwards, when it was too late, when I had learnt the full force of our love, and knew that nothing on earth could lessen or kill it.

At the first touch of love one can think of nothing but its sweetness. And I had been famishing for yours, my darling, from the first moment I saw you; from the first night when you brushed softly past me, and I caught a bit of your gown in my stiff fingers, and let it go again all unnoticed. And I never seemed to think again of what I was, or of what might come, till, as I say, all was given and taken and it was too late to spare you the suffering.

Would you have me remember the evening before the fatal night? How joyous you were, Eileen! All your Irish nature rose in you, and you bewildered me with your brilliant sallies, and witty repartee, to my bungling fun that had lain dormant so long.

We were sitting together here—it must have been on this very spot, for I remember how you plucked the rushes as you talked—and suddenly you asked: “Does anyone ever *laugh* in prison?”

“Very seldom.”

You came closer still and laid my hand against your cheek, as if you were sorry to have mentioned a painful thing, but that the thought in you must be uttered.

“If there were more laughter in the world, there would be less crime—laughter is so humanising—and I always think God loves us best when we are merry.”

“But the prison chaplain never laughs!” I said.

You frowned. “Don’t be sarcastic, I mean what I say, and if I were a chaplain, I would laugh first and pray after.”

“We will laugh for ever when we have crossed the sea, Eileen; *when*, my love, *when*. Do you know the vessel is anchored at Portsmouth?”

“Hush!” you whispered, “I hear footsteps!”

I looked out into the darkness that was creeping round us, and saw them coming—two black figures—and knew who they were, for what they came; and so did you.

Oh, God! to have spared you that horrible agony.

“Fly!” you shrieked.

But I snatched you to my heart.

“Too late! Eileen! I will come back!”

I don’t know what followed, I only remember turning to see you standing, a beautiful white spirit in the moonlight with your arms thrown up for heaven’s mercy.

And I *have* come back. Recognised, at last, by my country, as I have been recognised for years in the heart of one woman—an *innocent man*.

Eileen! I look across at the little cottage, and wonder shall I find you there, waiting?

The last page is written in a woman’s hand.

You did not doubt that you would find me, love? You knew whilst life was in me I should be waiting here.

Our story is written, thank God! that part is over. Shall we bury it, love, and leave behind us all the tears?

Oh! my beloved, in our home across the seas there shall be nothing but smiles.

LILIAN STREET.



CERTAIN ROYAL JILTINGS.

BY ELEANOR F. COBBY, AUTHOR OF "REMARKABLE SAYINGS OF
REMARKABLE QUEENS," "ANNE BOLEYN'S DECISION," ETC.

THE field of jiltedom is of wide extent. Now it is a maid-of-all-work, who has her tender troubles, and now it is a lady moving in superior society, and now it is a man who is thrown over by the woman he loved.

The breach of promise trials, to which the jilted sometimes fly for redress, amuse us all; for though occasionally we are moved to indignant interest, on the whole we laugh at the love-letters.

And the jilted ones take their injury in such various ways; some parade their wrongs in public, and some press them to their hearts in deadly silence. Some tear their hair in helpless rage, some ridicule the person who has deserted them, some sulk for the remainder of their lives, but the greater number quickly give up grieving and look about them serenely for another object on which to fix their affections.

Jilting would seem a thing out of tune with the stately harmonies of court life, and yet the royal jilt has been common enough in the centuries. We shall find there are many instances in the history of our own country.

It is well-known that Queen Anne was jilted in early youth, and it is notorious that Queen Elizabeth, on the other hand, deceived every one of her numerous suitors, from the devoted Arundel down to the little French duke whom she so very much befooled.

The wife of William the Conqueror was a beautiful devout woman, with taste for the fine arts, but all her devotion to the Church of Rome and all her intellectual proclivities did not prevent her taking a cruel revenge upon Brihtric Meaw, the Saxon nobleman, who had jilted or rejected her when she was only the unmarried daughter of a

Count of Flanders. The very first year that her husband became king, she obtained an iniquitous grant of all Brihtric Meaw's possessions in Gloucestershire for her own use; and not content with plundering the man who had despised her, she caused him to be cast into prison, and arranged that he should lie there till he died.

We may add he was "privately buried," as an old chronicle informs us; and in those days there was no inquest—no medical certificate of death.

The reasons why our Lion-Hearted Richard refused to fulfil his long standing contract with Alice of France, and married another princess, are better not discussed, for the case is one of ugly mystery.

The next royal jilting to which we come has nothing dark or unexplained about it, but moves on ordinary lines. It is the old story of the humbler suitor discarded for the sake of one who can give a splendid position.

"Now she rides by in her pride and her carriage;
Why did she leave him because he was poor?"

It is precisely *that*—with the scene shifted to a court.

Isabella of Angoulême, the most beautiful queen who ever sat on the throne of England, was only fifteen years of age when King John saw, and fell in love with her exquisite face. Long before this meeting she had been solemnly betrothed to Hugh de Lusignan, and even confided to his care for education according to the curious custom of the times. Isabella was the only child of the Count of Angoulême, and as his heiress was recalled to her home to assist him in doing homage to John as their feudal lord, and that kingly cur, attracted by her wonderful beauty, thought nothing of her previous engagement.

It appears, however, clear that he received prompt and great encouragement. The parents were ambitious for their child, the child was ambitious for herself as her after career abundantly proves, and though she preferred Lusignan, he could not give her a crown. Therefore, Lusignan went to the wall. She married John, who was double her age, at Bordeaux in 1200, and her jilted lover filled the air with cries of despair and rage. He did more, he challenged John, he took part with Arthur of Bretagne, and finally fell into the hands of the English.

And now comes the one strange feature of the story.

King John, who was cruel as a tiger, who murdered his own nephew and starved to death twenty-two knights taken prisoners at the same time, actually spared the life of Lusignan, and as years passed on they became friends. So intimate indeed did the alliance between them grow, that Joanna—the eldest daughter of John and Isabella—was betrothed to the injured man and delivered to him to be educated precisely as her mother had been.

But there was to be a second chapter to this jilting story, and a second person jilted. Isabella acted with great energy in the interests of her son when King John died, but being offered no share in the regency, she retired in July 1217 to Angoulême, which was her own inheritance.

Some three years later—probably while visiting Joanna—she again met the lover of her youth, who was now Count de la Marche, and the old feelings revived.

Never, indeed, could any woman be to Lusignan what Isabella had been, and she—if capable of love at all—had always secretly inclined to him. The sequel may be guessed. The beautiful widow was Countess in her own right, the brave Lusignan had just succeeded to his father's possessions; each, therefore, was ruler in a petty state, and both were of full age and knew extremely well what they meant and what they wanted. There was only Joanna between them, and the rights of a child of ten of course went for nothing. So they married, and their after-life is full of dramatic interest, but cannot be followed out in this paper, which deals only with jilts and jilting.

The rejected Joanna was sent back to England and married at York, 1221, to the King of Scotland, by which union peace was restored between the two countries, and she acquired the lovely name of "Joan Makepeace." She was beautiful in mind as well as person, but died at the early age of twenty-six.

The weak, whimsical, but affectionate Henry III. was greatly exercised on the subject of matrimony, principally, it would seem, because he set such a very high value on himself, and demanded so much from the other contracting party. He was disappointed three or four times, and then, very coolly, jilted the lady who had been got to accept him, in order to marry another whom he fancied he should like better. The annoyance of her who was cast off must have been accentuated by the fact that she was actually the daughter of that Alice of France whom King Richard I. had declined to espouse.

However, her prospects were not ruined for life by Henry's fickleness and fads, for she married a Spanish King and became mother of Eleanor of Castile, whose beautiful memory perfumes the archives of England. It was thus one of the ironical repetitions of history that Edward I. should wed and dearly love the daughter of the woman whom his father had jilted, and who was at the same time the granddaughter of that other lady whom his great uncle had mysteriously forsaken.

But, "Edward, tyrant!" of the famous Scotch song was himself a jilted man. After the death of Eleanor—his "*Chère reine*"—whom he deeply and passionately lamented, the prospect of marrying the most beautiful princess in Europe was dangled before his eyes. In the end however, Blanche the Fair threw over her elderly lover, and he had to content himself with her younger and plain sister, Margaret of France. It was a good exchange for him, for it gave him worth

instead of outside beauty. His second queen though only seventeen when he married her, turned out a devoted wife, a merciful woman, and an amiable step-mother.

Elizabeth of York, the heiress of the White Rose, was grievously jilted when a girl, and so great was the rage of her father, Edward IV., that the violent passion into which he flew brought on his fatal illness.

She had been affianced at an early age to the Dauphin Charles, son of Louis XI. of France, and her father, always exceedingly proud of the stately and beautiful girl, had seen that she was carefully educated in the French language and manners, while the whole English Court had addressed her as "Madame la Dauphine."

Louis XI. must have smiled in his sleeve while this was going on with the enjoyment natural to a brain so wily and a soul so mean, for he never had had the slightest intention that the marriage should take place if anything better came in the way of his heir. He had merely used the idea of it as a bribe to keep Edward from attacking France, and threw aside his mask when it suited him to substitute the daughter of the Emperor Maximilian for Elizabeth. This lady was afterwards jilted by his son to make the thing complete.

We hardly know whether the young and witty Duchess-dowager of Milan rejected only or jilted King Henry VIII., when she sent the well-known message, that if she had "two heads, one should be' at the service of His Majesty." At any rate, it is an established fact that she had allowed the matrimonial discussion to go on for some time until she put a stop to it in those true and cutting words.

Henry's daughter, Mary I., was jilted in a very diplomatic manner by the Emperor Charles V. He amused her father and mother as long as it pleased him with the idea that he seriously intended to wait for the child to grow up; and then, when his purpose was served, he married Isabella of Portugal, the beautiful cousin whom he had always loved. Mary, as we all know, eventually gave her hand to the infamous Philip of Spain, the son of this very marriage; and if the father had been too old for her, the son was much too young.

Queen Elizabeth, who, in spite of her splendid abilities and patriotic spirit, could not forbear from flirting with every man she met, and jilting every suitor she had, was rejected once herself in a very mortifying manner. The handsome French King, Henry III., before his accession, entirely refused to pay court to the "old woman," as he called her, though his mother strained every nerve to make him more pliant.

The romantic journey of Charles I. to Madrid to seek a Spanish bride led, through intricate plots and counterplots, to the breaking off of the projected match, and the Infanta in the end married an Emperor of Germany.

Charles II., when wandering about in the days of his sad exile, hounded from country to country, had been rejected with scorn by a princess of the House of Orange, and he could not forget it. This

despised love of his youth when he was firmly seated on the throne of England, made him indifferent as to who his future wife should be, only that *one* name should not appear amongst the list of eligible ladies. With this stern exception, he left the choice pretty much to his ministers, insisting, however, that he must have wealth, and should prefer dark eyes. The Orange Princess was fair.

Queen Anne, in her young days, was cast off by the German prince, who succeeded her on the throne of England as George I., and though she made such a happy marriage with another George, she never forgave the offence. Her parliament might entail her crown on his family, but she had a sovereign's power, and while she lived, she would not permit him to set foot in England.

The Prince of Orange was abruptly dismissed by the brave and noble Charlotte of Wales, but we feel inclined to add that we are glad she did it, that it served him right, and that most likely he was pleased to be jilted. The truth appears to have been that the matching of these young people was a favourite scheme with their elders, but never desired by themselves. And nothing can be more dangerous to morality, or more cruel to the feelings of the bride and bridegroom than to force a marriage on. The taxes laid on such are tears of blood.



THE HALF-BURNT LETTER.

By CLARA N. CARVALHO.

A FIRE at a theatre near by had filled the accident ward of St. X's Hospital. Many patients were crushed and bruised, besides being severely burnt, the most serious case being that of a tall, slight, young man, a gentleman to judge by his dress, who it was said had done more than anyone else to help his companions in misfortune, till he received a blow from a falling beam that prostrated him and rendered him insensible.

Philip Bryant, the house surgeon, had been actively engaged with these sufferers for some hours, and now at last thoroughly exhausted, had contrived to snatch a few minutes in which to make out his notes and take the food and rest he so much required. He was writing busily when a low knock came at the door of his room, and one of the nurses entered carrying a small basket in her hand.

"I thought I had better bring these things to you, sir," she said, laying a packet on the table. "They belong to the patient with the wound on his head. Will you look over them. They may afford some clue to his name or where he lives."

"I will attend to them in a moment, Sister Dorcas," Mr. Bryant replied, without raising his eyes from his work. "Is there any change since I saw him?"

The nurse made her report and left the room. Bryant wrote on till he came to the end of the sheet; then he read over carefully what he had written, made one or two corrections, and closed the book. He glanced somewhat regretfully at the easy-chair in the corner.

"I must look over those things first," he muttered as he pulled the little collection of charred trifles towards him. "Then I shall be able to take my nap with a clear conscience."

The collection was commonplace enough. It consisted of the broken fragments of a meerschaum pipe, silver-mounted; a pocket-book singed in places, and drenched with water; a purse, fairly well filled, and a partially consumed cardboard case, holding photographs of a young man in uniform—presumably the patient himself.

The initials E. G. were engraved on the pipe, and on the flap of the purse. Opening the pocket-book carefully, Bryant took from it half-a-dozen visiting cards that crumbled under his touch, and a half-burnt letter.

He laid these aside and began to piece out the photograph from the relics of the dozen the case had recently contained. In a short time he had managed to construct a portrait that afforded him a very

good idea of what the injured man had been like a few hours before. The change was startling. Those bright, keen eyes were dull and spiritless now, the complexion scarred and seamed with cracks, the fair hair singed and rough. Only the forehead and nose bore any resemblance to that of the young soldier so sorely stricken.

"An Indian officer, I should say," Bryant murmured as he contemplated his handiwork. "It ought to be comparatively easy to find out who he is. Some one will know to what regiment the uniform belongs, though I do not. Possibly the photographer can tell me—the number is legible, luckily. Who is it? Oh, I see—I will send over in the morning.

"There is only the letter to examine now," he resumed, as he took up the pocket-book. "I hardly like to do it, but I suppose I must. Not that I shall get much information from it, for the envelope and half of the paper have been burnt away."

He unfolded the sheet as he spoke and gazed at it with a perplexed expression of countenance. Surely the writing was familiar. Or was it his fancy? No, he knew every stroke and turn. That Elsie—his Elsie—had traced those characters, he could affirm unhesitatingly. He would read no further. He desired to pry into no one's secrets—least of all into hers.

Still, he must look at the signature, if only to make sure. Uncertainty would be torture. Feverishly he turned the page to see if the flames had spared the conclusion, and read the words—"At last, my dearest.

"Yours for ever and aye,
"ELSIE BRAYBROOKE."

He strove to refold the letter and restore it to its hiding-place, but the temptation to know more was too strong. Elsie's handwriting drew him like a magnet. Once, he resolutely withdrew his eyes from the paper, but the next moment they were greedily devouring every syllable.

It was a heavy blow. The letter—what there was of it—breathed affection, tenderness, trust in every line. And he had believed she felt all these for himself. Poor fool—how egregiously he had been deceived.

"We have waited such a weary time," Elsie wrote. "I can hardly realise that I am free to pour out to you all that is in my heart. I am so happy, dear. I keep repeating to myself, that I love you, and you only. As to——"

"As to Philip, what did I ever care for him?" was how the unhappy reader finished the sentence, as with trembling fingers he turned the last page.

"I shall count the days till you come for me, my own," were the next words his eyes lighted upon. "I wonder when and where you will get this. Edward ——"

"Edward?" and the purse and pocket-book were marked "E. G." Bryant knew now who his rival was. He could remember hearing at one time a good deal about a certain Edward Gardiner, a captain in Colonel Braybrooke's regiment, and cousin to Elsie's stepmother. Doubtless the young man had been thrown designedly into Elsie's society, and had made the most of his opportunities. Among new scenes the girl had forgotten her former lover—it was the old story.

Bryant lay back in his chair, a prey to very bitter reflections. His life from boyhood had been one of toil and endeavour—Elsie's love, its sole gleam of brightness. His thoughts flew back to the time when he and his sister Lina had been taken by their mother to the Hollies to play with little Elsie Braybrooke, who lived there with her aunt during her father's absence in India. Elsie had remained there after her school-days were over (for Colonel Braybrooke, being a widower, could not conveniently have his daughter with him), and had grown up a charming and most amiable girl.

Years went by. The boy and girl who had played together grew to be lovers, and though they had no immediate prospect of marriage were happy enough till Colonel Braybrooke, having taken unto himself a second wife, came over to England to fetch his daughter. When he was told of the attachment she had formed, he had expressed the greatest indignation at what he termed his sister's culpable neglect of her niece's interests. He could find nothing against Philip but lack of means, but that was an insuperable barrier in his eyes. So he dissolved the engagement, forbade all correspondence, and carried Elsie off to India, where, he asserted, he would speedily find her a suitable husband.

One brief interview was all he allowed to the lovers. Bryant could still call up the vision of Elsie's tear-stained face as she clasped her arms round his neck and pressed a long farewell kiss on his lips. He could still hear her sweet voice as she reiterated her promise never to forget him; to love him always; to be his till death and after.

They had parted, and old Miss Braybrooke dying shortly afterwards, had for nearly five years heard nothing of each other but what could be learned from the newspapers. It was next to impossible that Bryant would, in any reasonable time, make an income large enough to satisfy Colonel Braybrooke's requirements, but he worked on hopefully, prayerfully, in perfect faith that his devotion would in the end win its reward.

And at last fortune favoured him. Within the last few months a distant cousin of his had died and left him all he possessed: a small estate near Sevenoaks, and an income more than sufficient to enable him to live in comfort and even luxury. One condition was attached to the bequest, that he should take his cousin's name. A condition he accepted, though reluctantly, and on entering St. X's Hospital had signed himself Philip Bryant, laying aside the name of Huntley by which he had been known to Miss Braybrooke. He ought to have

found means to acquaint her with the change, but had delayed doing so, thinking it would be time enough when he had acquired possession of the property and could claim her as his wife. He had no intention of giving up his profession, to which he was devoted, and in which he was already pre-eminently skilful, and he would now be able to take a standing at once for which he might have had to wait through years of toil.

The great clock striking the hour at which Bryant paid his nightly visit to the ward, roused him from dwelling on the past, and he rose mechanically and commenced his usual round. On his way up the ward he paused at Gardiner's bedside. The patient had recovered consciousness so far as to be able to mutter a few incoherent words, but his injuries were so severe, there was little hope of his recovery. As Bryant gazed at him, humanity, the natural desire to help a fellow-creature in such sore straits, the medical instinct in short, prompted him to do his utmost to restore the man to health—whilst jealousy stayed his hand and bade him remember that it was well his rival should perish—he deserved his fate.

Bryant took a seat by the sick man's couch and shaded his eyes with his hand. So this was Elsie's lover, he mused; her "dearest for ever and aye," and it had fallen to his, Bryant's lot to bring him back to life. Should he accept the charge, or should he be by a little inattention—— Bryant shivered. "God help me," he moaned, as he rose and beckoned to the nurse. "Am I then a murderer?"

His hand may have shaken a little as he examined the captain's wound, but if so, it was the sole evidence of the struggle going on within. His face was impenetrable as he issued the most minute directions for the patient's treatment. That brief prayer was granted. Before he left the ward he had registered a vow to do his duty to the last. Elsie should have her lover, if any effort of his could save him for her.

For days a battle went on between life and death. Bryant gave up all his spare time to the case, and indeed played the part of nurse to Captain Gardiner as well as that of doctor. He failed to discover any friends of the young officer's, but believing him to be able to afford the expense, had him removed to a private room and supplied with every comfort. Night after night he passed at Gardiner's bedside, taking neither rest nor sleep; till students, doctors and nurses were lost in wonder. The case was an interesting one, they owned, but there was nothing in it, as it seemed to them, to call for such excessive devotion.

To nurse an unconscious man was comparatively easy, but when sense returned and the patient's strength increased, Bryant was fain to acknowledge that the task he had set himself was no light one. By enjoining complete silence, he managed for a time to check many little confidences and grateful speeches on the part of the sick man, though now and then words would fall from him that gave Bryant so

sharp a pang, that he was almost forced in self-defence to plead indisposition and hand over the case to a colleague.

His life in India was the theme the Captain loved most to dwell upon, and to that it was impossible to listen. And when one day—both hands being still useless—Gardiner made an urgent appeal to his doctor to write a few lines for him to a friend out there, Bryant's self-control gave way, and in an abrupt tone that filled Sister Dorcas with dismay, declared he could not and would not do it, and then left the room.

Sister Dorcas wrote that letter, and when it was finished, laid it in its envelope on the surgeon's table to be sent to the post with his own despatches—thus unwittingly supplying him with the very information he was longing for: Colonel Braybrooke's address. He was sorely tempted to write to Elsie, and tell her he knew of her treachery, but altered his mind as he tried to frame the sentence, and laid his pen aside.

It was a great relief to him when at length Captain Gardiner was strong enough to quit the hospital; so much so, that he feared the young man would read it in his eyes, and (for he was very plain-spoken) seek to know the reason. He felt it was churlish to choke off the young fellow's thanks; to refuse further intercourse with him; but no other course was possible, though he acknowledged to himself that under other circumstances, a strong friendship might have existed between himself and his patient; there was so much in the man's character calling for admiration.

The pocket-book and other trifles had remained in Bryant's possession since the night of the fire, and now, on this last morning, must be delivered to their owner. He had intended to have sent them in by another hand, but a messenger failing him at the moment, had to take them himself. Gardiner loosened the string that bound the packet and glanced at the photograph, as he did so making some half-laughing allusion to the loss of his good looks—looks which he was assured would return. Then he pressed the remnant of the letter to his lips and sighed. Suddenly an idea seemed to strike him and he exclaimed:

"There is a question I want to ask you, doctor. I wonder I never thought of it before. Do you——" but ere he could proceed further, Bryant had turned round as if in answer to some call from without and disappeared. And as he did not return before Gardiner left the hospital, the sentence was never finished, and the two parted without either hand-shake or farewell.

The patient once gone, Bryant strove to dismiss the whole affair from his mind, and seek in hard work a refuge from bitter thought. He would fain have thrown up his appointment and left the country, but his only sister was dependent on him, and until the legacy was paid, he had not the means to support her comfortably without drawing his pay. She would have gone with him and cheerfully

endured any hardship, but he would not accept the sacrifice. Her sympathy was a great comfort to him in his trial, though at times Lina gave him many an unconscious stab by her wholesale condemnation of Elsie's conduct. Elsie had behaved very badly, doubtless, but her old lover could not hear her blamed, there must be some excuse for her.

Captain Gardiner, as it proved, was not one to let himself fade from his doctor's memory. The very first day his fingers could grasp a pen, he wrote to Philip to report progress, and to reproach him—though good-naturedly—for having run away without giving him any opportunity of expressing his full gratitude for the unvarying kindness shown to him. Receiving no reply, he wrote again, urging Bryant to call upon him, adding that he was forbidden the exertion, or he would have paid a visit to the hospital before this, but that the first time he took a drive he should look in.

Bryant could save his rival's life, but to give him his hand in friendship was out of his power. His reply was, to say the truth, very surly. "Pray do not thank me," he wrote. "I have done nothing to deserve it. I am paid to attend the patients here: it is my duty. And do not call on me, I beg of you. I have no wish to receive visitors."

A few months later Bryant, being in possession of his property, settled his sister in the house at Sevenoaks with an old lady to bear her company, and began to make preparations for a voyage to the Antipodes. One day, about a fortnight before his intended departure, he ran down to spend a few hours with Lina, when in the course of conversation she alluded to a note she had lately received.

"It is from Mr. Thompson," she added, "old Miss Braybrooke's solicitor. I used often to meet him at the Hollies when the old lady was alive, and he has never lost sight of me. He says a friend of his is seeking information he believes I can supply, and asks me to let him call here. He adds that he encloses the gentleman's card, but I cannot find it. I could not refuse Mr. Thompson's request, so I appointed this afternoon; thinking you would be here and would help me to receive my visitor. But what can he want with me?"

"I cannot enlighten you, Lina," her brother replied carelessly, "but you will know very soon, for I hear a ring at the door now."

The servant handed a card to Miss Huntley as she ushered in the stranger. Lina glanced at it and blushed a deep crimson. Seeing her agitation, Philip looked up with some curiosity, and his eyes met those of Captain Gardiner.

"Doctor," the young man exclaimed, with such evident gratification in his tone that Lina's heart warmed to him in spite of her prejudice, "what a happy chance this is. I am so glad to meet you again."

He was wonderfully improved since Bryant had seen him last, and was quite as handsome now, if not so radiant, as when his photograph had been taken. He held out his hand as he spoke, but the other

would not see it, and a grave inclination of the head was all the greeting the doctor vouchsafed to his former patient.

The Captain coloured with vexation, but remembering he was in a lady's presence, controlled himself. Turning to Lina, he said quietly—

"Miss Huntley, I am much indebted to you for so kindly allowing me to call upon you. But the matter I have to discuss with you is of a private nature, and——" he looked towards Bryant and hesitated.

"Pray speak freely," Miss Huntley rejoined politely, as she offered him a seat, "I have no secrets from my brother. In what way can I serve you, Captain Gardiner?"

"Is Dr. Bryant your brother?" Captain Gardiner asked in a tone of surprise. "How very strange. You have more than one, then, for I am now in search of a Mr. Huntley, who, I am informed, is a brother of yours. Can you give me his address? Mr. Thompson would have written to you for it, but I preferred to see you myself, as I have much to say that will interest you."

"My brother took the name of Bryant more than a year ago, by the request of a deceased relative," pursued Lina. "I wonder you did not hear that at the hospital. He was so much with you."

"Yes—and if I had had my wits about me, might have found my man long ago," said the Captain ruefully. "Ah, I begin to understand one or two little things that have perplexed me very much. Doctor," he went on, taking a letter-case from his pocket, "the matter is simply this: Miss Braybrooke—we are connections, as you may have heard—Elsie Braybrooke, not knowing where to find you, commissioned me, when I was in England, to seek you out and deliver to you a most important letter. Before I could make inquiries as to your whereabouts, I was struck down as you know. It is only within the last few weeks that I have been able to move in the matter. The letter, unfortunately, has been mutilated, though by no fault of mine. But such as it is, I will give it to you, and trust to your goodness to excuse the delay. Here it is."

Philip's face was very pale as he took it from the Captain's hand, and once more read the words that had given him such bitter pain. He tried to speak, but could not command his voice. Lina came to his assistance, though she was too much affected for her words to be very coherent.

"What must you think of me, Gardiner," he said at length, recovering himself with a strong effort. "I have in truth been a jealous fool. I ought to have known my sweet Elsie better than to have doubted her. But the address of the letter was gone as you see, and what could I think but that it belonged to you. Can you ever pardon my rudeness to you?"

"It needs no excuse, my dear fellow," cried Gardiner heartily. "I owe my life to you, remember. Now I see why it was you could not make a friend of me. You thought I had supplanted you—you had

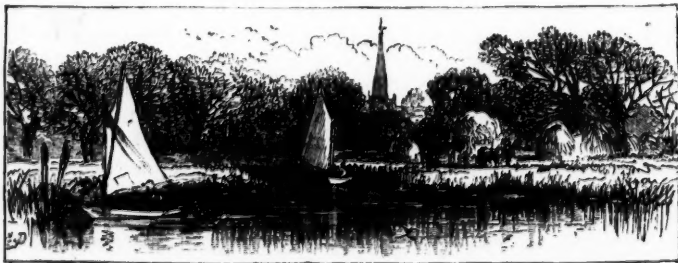
every reason to think so. You are a wonderful man, Bryant. In your place I should have wrung my patient's neck."

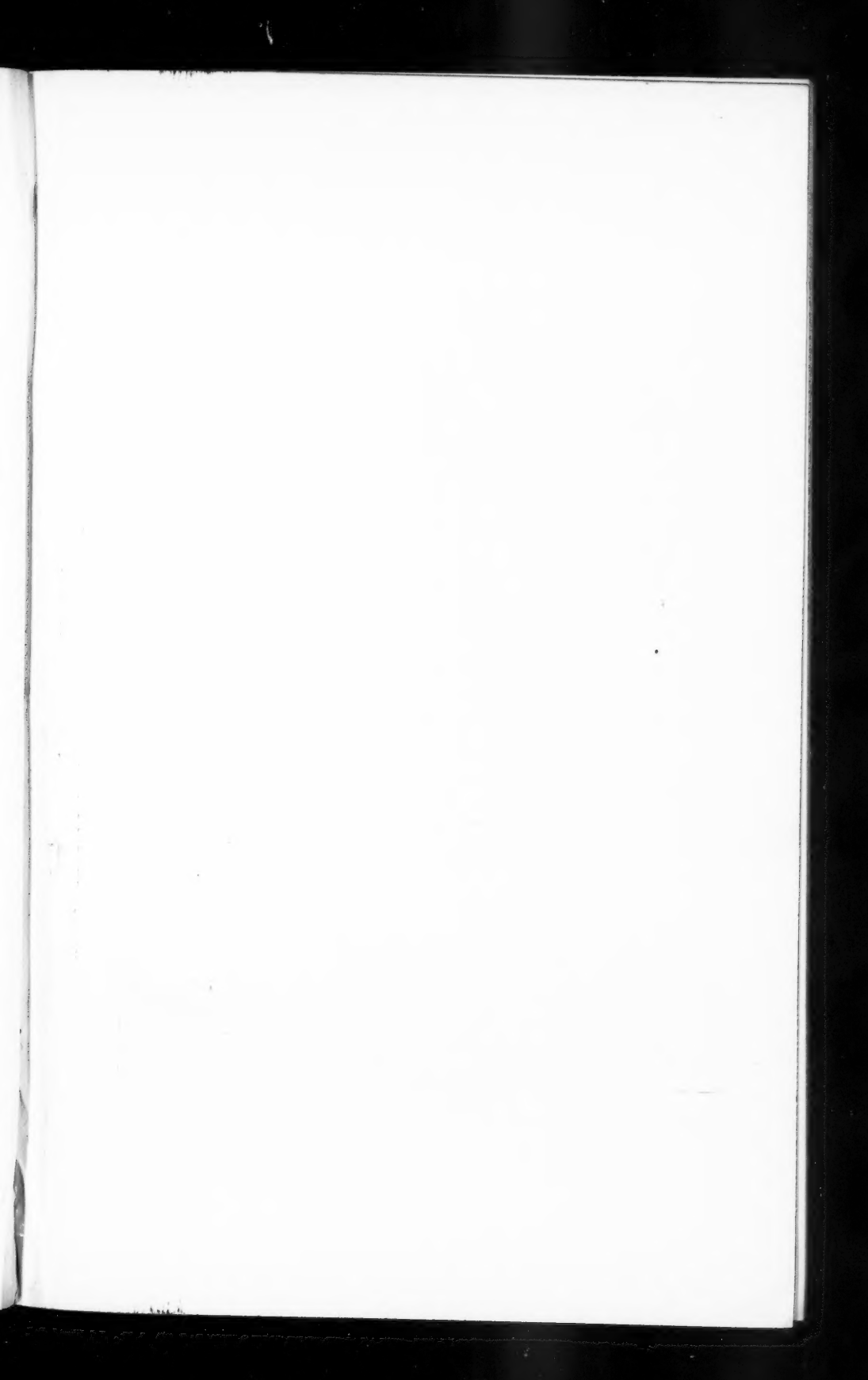
"Do not make a joke of it," Bryant said gravely. "Rather let us return thanks to God for having given me strength to resist temptation, But for pity's sake, enlighten me. What causes Miss Braybrooke to write as she does here?"

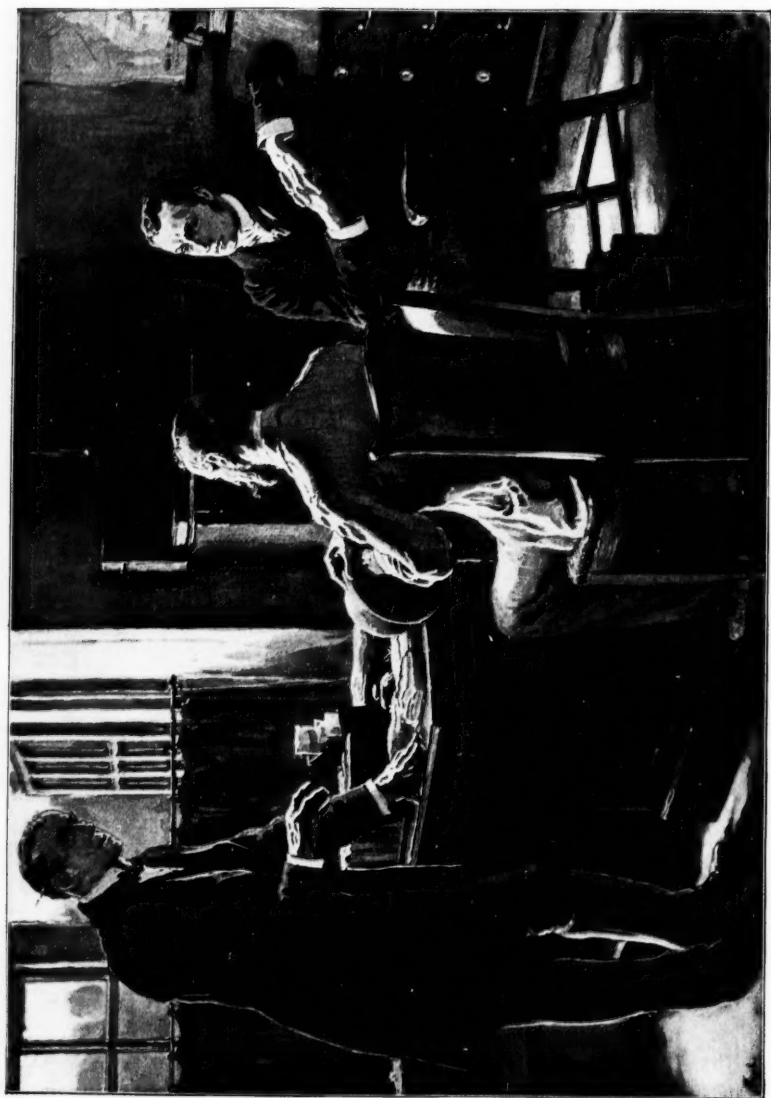
"As you may suppose," replied Gardiner, "our Colonel tried his utmost to make a grand match for his daughter, and would have given her gladly to any rich fellow in the regiment—my unworthy self among the number," he added with a half-laugh. "But Elsie stuck to you through thick and thin, and wouldn't look at any of us. She said plainly she was engaged, and let her father bluster. And when the English papers reported that Mr. Huntley had come into a handsome property, he withdrew his objections and gave Elsie permission to tell you so. If you would have only allowed me to talk about India when I was in hospital, the matter might have been cleared up last year. But let that rest. Will you take my hand now, Bryant? I can't deny that I had a fancy for Elsie, but you have nothing to fear from me."

"If you owe your life to me, I owe my happiness to you, so we are quits," said Bryant gratefully, as he pressed the young man's hand. "Believe me, I shall value your friendship very highly. It is more than I deserve. But now I must ask you to excuse me for a few minutes while I write a line by the Indian mail. There will be just time to catch the post if I begin at once, and meanwhile my sister will take care of you."

The very next steamer took Philip Bryant to Calcutta, where his bride was waiting to receive him. His troubles were at an end. But happy as he is in his wife's love a shade of sadness always comes into his eyes if any chance circumstance recalls to his mind that half-burnt letter. Captain Gardiner and himself are close friends—and very soon, so Elsie says, will be brothers-in-law.







"PATTEN, I BELIEVE YOU HAD A GREAT DEAL TO DO WITH THE AFFAIRS OF THE LATE
MR. GLYN OF FIRVOLDs?"